THE GHOSTS *of* FLEET STREET

JOHN GORE

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The GHOSTS *of* FLEET STREET

By

JOHN GORE

With Illustrations by

JOSEPH PIKE

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PREFACE

My object in writing this little book on Fleet Street was twofold.

First, it was my privilege to provide a commentary on Mr. Joseph Pike's charming drawings of old Fleet Street landmarks. Secondly, it was my hope to provide a handy guide for intelligent sightseers. To this end I have painted one or two rude pictures of the life of the street in ancient times, and thereafter have strictly followed a fixed itinerary, pausing on the journey to describe such objects as appeared to me to provide the chiefest interest or amusement.

The reader, therefore, is invited to see Fleet Street, book in hand, by the author's itinerary. To start at Temple Bar and visit all objects of interest in their turns on the *south* side; on reaching Ludgate Circus to return on the *north* side in the same leisurely manner.

If he will do so he will find that from Chapter IV onwards the book provides its own index, every relevant detail in the earlier general chapters being accorded reference in its proper place. In no sense is this little book an exhaustive history of Fleet Street.

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CHAPTER I

Fleet Street from Roman Times

It has occurred of late to many lovers of London and lovers of old times, that the City which they learned to love in their youth no longer changes its face by a process too gradual to cause anxiety or shock, as the faces of those with whom we live change in old age.

In the last decade, it has been borne in upon them that with the progress of science in all its branches, the London which satisfied the Victorian is utterly unfit for the accommodation of the present generation. Progress is a juggernaut conqueror whose organized armies no devoted band of diehards can long withstand; and we, who learned to love and take pride in the possession of a city which has been two thousand years a-building, a city in which the architectural gems of every century stood side by side, silent witnesses to the genius and courage of our race and living illustrations of its history and records, must patiently endure while a new generation, wiser, hastier, more enlightened than all that have preceded it, destroys and rebuilds London nearer to its heart's desire. Nor can we blame it. Never has there been an age so jealously careful of ancient monuments as our own; yet London, whose proud destiny it is to be Capital of the World, inevitably

chooses to be a capital rather than a museum. One pious duty remains for us to perform. We are at last alive to the importance of placing on record, by every means in our power, the form and aspect of all those ancient monuments which are being inevitably sacrificed to the cause of Progress, and of rescuing from oblivion the history which was made within their walls and the traditions which gradually grew up round them. Hence it is that in the making of many books about old and vanishing London there has been in the past decade no end; hence and herewith I add my quota to the shelf.

Fleet Street is my subject; Fleet Street and the twoscore lanes and passages and courts which lead from it; a tiny square in the chequerboard of London, in acreage inconsiderable, but for its power, its industry, its history, and its traditions, rich beyond dreams of avarice.

Our area is bounded on the west by Temple Bar, on the east by Ludgate Circus, northward by Holborn, and southward by the Thames.

You may traverse it west to east or north to south in five short minutes. You may know it in five years—five short years, if, as I, you have a taste for humanity and romance.

It is extraordinary to realize how late in its history London grew westward. At the Restoration the Strand was one of the suburbs of the town; Charing or Cherringe was a village of inns and stables, and green fields stretched thence to

St. James's Palace, unsullied by bricks and mortar, save for the wall of the deer park. But Fleet Street was the teeming habitation of men fifteen hundred years before the first house rose beside Piccadilly. It takes its name from that small but rapid stream, the Fleet, which rises at Hampstead and runs by Kentish Town to Holborn. Here it joins the Old Bourne and runs under Farringdon Street, the eastern boundary of our area, and discharges into the Thames.

The Romans used it and colonized its banks, for the River Fleet was navigable up to and beyond Holborn Bridge until the dawn of the eighteenth century. Coins, utensils, weapons, and works of art of Roman, Saxon, Danish, and possibly earlier inhabitants have been constantly dug up from the bed of the river, and even now a piece of virgin soil in the centre of our Fleet Street area is yielding a wealth of evidence of 2,000 years of crowded occupation, and samples of every shape and type of tobacco pipe since that enchanting vice became common.

And as I was writing these lines there came news that in the foundations of the *Daily Express* extension buildings in Shoe Lane, off Fleet Street (which we shall visit together), the first known Roman cemetery, west of the Fleet River, had just been unearthed some twenty feet below the modern ground level. Some of the urns, containing the bones of 1,800-year-old Romans, are already installed in the London Museum.

With permission I shall quote an article which appeared in the *Daily Express* on November 23, 1927, the day on which the find was announced. It is from the pen of Mr. H. V. Morton, and admirably supplies a picture of Roman London :

Roman London

"The burials were discovered by workmen in a great pit eighteen to twenty feet below the level of modern London. They were driving down foundations for new machine-rooms, and had only a few feet to go before they struck the London clay. One of them noticed peculiar hard substances—'like footballs covered in clay,' as he expressed it—tightly embedded in the side of the pit.

"These were removed with great care. When the clay and caked soil had been washed away the urns were revealed, full to the neck with brittle, calcined human bones.

"The bones were dry and light as touchwood. Sections of vertebræ were plainly recognizable; so were kneecaps and fragments of large joint bones.

"There were, perhaps, twenty or more burials in the small space. Most of the urns had endured heavy earth pressure for centuries, and when the clay which held them together was dissolved they crumbled to pieces.

"The position of the burials suggested that only a small section of a great cemetery

had been opened up. This cemetery may still lie beneath the buildings of Shoe Lane, and even farther west.

"One of the most skilful archæological restorers in the country took charge of the urns and subjected them to treatment. He managed to preserve eight perfect urns, with their contents.

"It is perhaps the human interest of such a discovery which appeals most vividly to the imagination. When these urns were placed in position, more than 1,800 years ago, Shoe Lane was a sloping great meadow on the banks of the Fleet, and eastward rose the first London, a little, busy, growing Winnipeg of the Roman Empire, its red-tiled roofs straggling down from London Bridge towards Ludgate Hill. It was, as yet, not circled by London Wall.

"The docks were busy with galleys from Rome and Gaul. The streets were vivid with the polyglot crowds which Rome drew to her cities: Spanish cavalry setting out for St. Albans; an auxiliary legion of Belgians on the march for Colchester; a high civil official in his two-horsed chariot; negro slaves; Egyptian soothsayers; Jewish merchants; army contractors; jerry builders; yellow-haired Gaulish fur merchants, and — who shall deny it?—possibly a few Greek tourists wandering round the public squares, gazing

at the statues of Cæsar, commenting on the 'quaintness' of the Britons and the pushful enterprise of inevitable Rome.

"There were still men living who had seen Christ, and the slaves who sweated up-river, chained to the galley oars, might even have brought the first whisper of Christianity to the young Roman city on Ludgate Hill.

"And as far away as the green meadow on the slopes of the Fleet River the first citizens of Rome were being burned on funeral pyres, their bones collected and placed beneath the London soil in little urns of grey pottery—the bones of the founders of London.

"I took up a handful of these brittle bones yesterday, and wondered about them. Was he a young Roman who had come to this cold end of the world to make his fortune, as young Englishmen go to Canada? Was he a merchant or a prospector who had followed the legions with the phrase, 'Trade follows the Eagles,' on his lips? Possibly the bones were those of a woman—a Roman wife who had followed her husband to Britain to die with the cold sweep of the Thames before her and behind her the bleak outline of the Hampstead Woods, and nothing to remind her of Rome but the creak of galleys coming up-river with news and wine and olives.

"Man or woman, these bones had known what it was to walk the streets of the first

London; this man or woman had seen the legions fling London Bridge across the Thames; had seen the sacred grove of Diana on Ludgate Hill; had heard the stonemasons put up the first statue to Cæsar in London as a sign that at last all the earth was circled by a Roman ocean.

"What is the message of these burials? They seem to tell us that within twenty or thirty years of her foundation London had grown so large that her citizens had to cross the Fleet River for their burial.

"It has always been considered that when Boadicea destroyed London in A.D. 60 the north-western limit of the City was the Cheapside to Old Bailey cemetery. These new burials suggest that this first London may have been much larger; that the boundary should be put forward as far as Shoe Lane. They tell us that London was an instantaneous commercial success; a mushroom city full of vigorous initiative; a city which within the first few years of her foundation grew like a Canadian town in which thousands of men have suddenly seen a new and profitable means of livelihood."

Mr. Morton's picture appeals to me. A man must have imagination to depict the first thousand years of London's street life. But we must not linger in an age so remote from our own subject and period.

Fleet River

We know that even in 1300 war vessels could sail up the Fleet to Holborn Bridge; we know from Ben Jonson (a famous Fleet Street worthy) that in his day it had fallen to the level of a stinking, stagnant drain, Valhalla of dead cats and measled hogs; that in 1652 it was ordered to be cleansed and was, indeed, after the Great Fire, taken in hand by the Corporation. Once more barges ascended to Holborn with freights of sea coal—a commodity which the stream had carried since the thirteenth century, as Secol Lane records. But the money spent was thrown away; the Thames mud won the day; the dead cats returned, and in the middle of the eighteenth century the stream began to be arched over. By that time, of course, Fleet Street had become the centre of London, the connecting link between the old City and the West End, and the loss of its navigable stream had no effect on the population of the area.

FLEET STREET.
LOOKING WEST

CHAPTER II

The Fire and the Ghosts of Fleet Street

But while we may find in its rich and storied soil the evidence of twenty centuries of continuous occupation, we cannot expect to find in Fleet Street many examples of pre-Restoration architecture. For the Great Fire of London, which broke out about one o'clock on Sunday morning, September 2, 1666, in the house of one Farryner, the King's baker, in Pudding Lane, did not cease its work of destruction until practically the whole of Fleet Street had been destroyed.

You have doubtless read many accounts of the affair. We, who have come to praise, before we bury, Fleet Street, will rely on extracts from the written evidence available in our own area.

In 1866 there was discovered in the Record Office (which we shall visit) a contemporary letter, addressed to Lord Conway, vividly describing the event.

The Great Fire

The flames destroyed most of Fleet Street "and all the Inner Temple till it came to the Hall, and was there most happily quenched as likewise in Fleet Street over against St. Dunstan's Church. Else, for aught appears, it might have swept away all the suburbs, viz. the Strand, Covent Garden . . .

"So great was the despair that when the

> fire was in the Temple, houses in the Strand adjoining Somerset House were blown up . . .
>
> "But it is fit that your Lordship should know that all that is left of City and suburbs is acknowledged to be wholly due to the King and Duke of York who, when the citizens abandoned further care of the place . . undertook the work themselves. . . ."

There are not too many feathers in "Old Rowley's" cap, hardly any in his brother James's! It is just that a unanimous testimony to their courage and devotion to duty in this great disaster should be recorded. They are true worthies of Fleet Street. You may carry away a picture of them forcing their horses through the smoke over the cobbles and potholes of the street, dodging the falling timbers, and lending a hand with the axe.

Without a doubt they saved the Temple and the Strand. The Temple Church and several other fine buildings on the western boundary of our area have survived that great fire intact. But practically all other architectural remains, from Roman times to the Restoration, are in fragmentary or ruinous form.

Johnson's London

The remnant of Fleet Street, which is the object of our pilgrimage, belongs in truth to eighteenth-century London, and is bound up with the name and fame of Dr. Samuel Johnson.

It is safe to say that in no other quarter of

London today can we obtain glimpses of the City as he saw and loved and learned to know it between 1738 and 1784.

How completely he made it his own we may learn from the list which he personally supplied to Boswell of the different lodgings which he occupied during his London life.

He never moved a biscuit toss from his beloved Fleet Street. Thus was his Odyssey :

> "Strand (1738), Boswell Court, Strand, Holborn, Fetter Lane, Holborn, Gough Square (1749-59), Staple Inn, Gray's Inn, 1 Inner Temple Lane (present site of Johnson Buildings), 7 Johnson's Court, and 8 Bolt Court."

We shall see more of the doctor and his daily habits when we come to visit his house in Gough Square. It seems to me—and the reflection never fails to please and to amuse me—that still his name instantly suggests that feverish, ugly, noisy, blatant thoroughfare which we know by the name of "Grub" Street or the more euphonious "Street of Adventure." It is, as we know it, sometimes a street of hasty judgment, of distorted truth, of elastic morality, of easy convictions.

Johnson, the presiding genius of our little corner of London, stands out as a profound lover of truth and a rigid sifter of evidence. A strong common sense, a high morality, and an absolute independence of character, marred only by the strength of his prejudices, went to the making of this great

Englishman. He stands, therefore, above Fleet Street, an example and ideal set rather high for practical purposes. But the man abounded in sympathy and overflowed with humanity, and doubtless prefers the streets to his pedestal, and finds in our midst a hundred qualities to admire and a thousand things to interest and delight him in our strange and feverish struggle to find truth, or dividends, at the bottom of the ink-well—a struggle so absurdly like, and unlike, that in which he himself joined.

Famous Ghosts

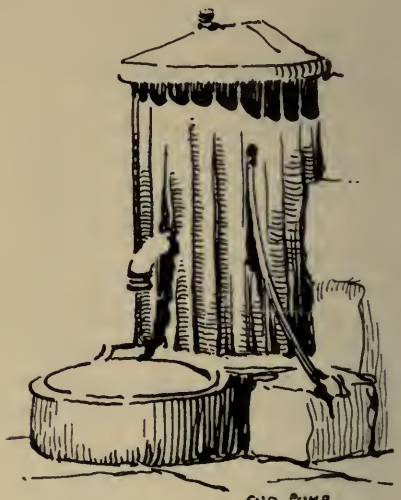
Johnson was the most faithful, but not necessarily the mightiest, of the mighty men of all ages who have frequented Fleet Street and its dark and tortuous lanes. Since the early Briton, the Roman, the Dane, the Saxon and the Norman trod its soil, its list of illustrious patrons has never ceased to grow, and can be satisfactorily compiled from records and tradition. When the Knights of St. John issued on their lawful occasions from their temple to the street, Chaucer was a student of the Inner Temple (as, indeed, later on was I), and he was fined 2*s.* for beating very grievously a Franciscan Friar in Fleet Street—a thing I never did. Rare Ben Jonson, often in liquor, constantly rolled out into the street from the Devil's Tavern; Shakespeare acted his own comedies within our precincts; Izaak Walton lived two years three doors west from Chancery Lane, in which Cowley was born; Milton lodged for a while hard by St. Bride's; Nell Gwynne, Dryden and Pepys were

early patrons of Child's Bank; Charles Sedley, the wit, committed some of his vilest atrocities in our street; Wren hurried down it every day; Richardson, who made literature pay, wrote *Pamela* in Salisbury Square, and employed Goldsmith as his "reader"; Hogarth came hither to gossip with Richardson and get copy for his rogues' gallery, and the splendid Mr. Addison and his friends did not disdain the hospitality of our taverns; Charles Lamb lived in the Temple and, in return, made the Temple live. These gave place to the giants of the nineteenth century, and we shall find traces at the "Cock" and "Cheshire Cheese" of Tennyson and Dickens and of Thackeray in every alley.

For Fleet Street has never ceased to draw to it the greatest names in literature. Why it is so I am not prepared to say, for Literature and Journalism are not derived from the same seed. Perhaps the great ones came to mock, and remained—to be paid. Journalism, on the whole, pays better than Literature—pays, at any rate, more punctually; which is the same thing when the belt is drawn in and the landlord presses.

And after naming all these great names I am but at the beginning of the list of noble ghosts whom you may meet in your wanderings. The Inns of Court which debouch upon the street were mothers of practically all the most illustrious of our Law Lords, Chief Justices, and Chancellors, from Gower and Coke to Asquith and Reading;

and the roll of their *alumni* numbers scores of brilliant, if weaker, brethren who, having set their hands to the plough, turned back and sought a furrow less dusty—Raleigh, Cromwell, Wycherley, Evelyn, Congreve, Burke, Sheridan, de Quincey, Canning, Pitt, Tom Moore, Disraeli . . . But, indeed, there is no end to our greatness. Fleet street is the mother of all.



OLD PUMP
SERJEANTS INN.

ESSEX STAIRS

CHAPTER III

A Picture of Restoration Fleet Street

It is not my aim to write the annals of Fleet Street. This task was admirably accomplished in 1912 by Mr. Beresford Chancellor, who has written a connected story out of material collected from every available source.

My object is to provide short and, if possible, interesting notes concerning the surviving antiquities of Fleet Street, many of which are here illustrated by the art of Mr. Joseph Pike.

And that being my design, it is worth once more reminding you that practically nothing remained after the Great Fire, save the Temple Church and certain famous buildings in the Temple and in other Inns, west and north-west of St. Dunstan's, and a sprinkling of old houses in the actual fire area, such as survived in Nevill's Court.

The Great Fire was not altogether a disaster, as you will agree if you will follow me in spirit through the earlier gateway at Temple Bar, with its tiled roof, classic columns, and two narrow arches, which remained the entrance to Fleet Street and the City until replaced after the Great Fire by Wren's nobler design.

Temple Bar

Before we pass through, let us notice an ancient custom which still remains, though nothing but an ugly monument marks the site of the Temple Bar gateways.

In ancient times a rude bar and posts divided the Liberty of Westminster and the Liberty of the City of London. When a gatehouse replaced the bar the doors were closed at night, that my Lord Mayor might safeguard his domain. When, on ceremonial occasions, the sovereign entered the City, it was customary to keep the gates closed until entry was formally demanded; whereupon the gates were thrown open, and the Lord Mayor surrendered the City sword. Kings and Queens since the time of Elizabeth, and doubtless earlier, observed this formality, and though the obstacle is now removed the spirit of the ceremony is maintained.

The Street of Adventure

We pass through the gateway for foot passengers on the south side and find ourselves in Fleet Street, in shape very much as it is today. It is a very narrow, very noisy, very mean street, tortuous and vilely cobbled, pitted with pot-holes and deep in refuse and garbage.

On either side the houses, mostly of timber, seem to cling together for support, like drunken men. The upper portions overhang the street or tilt forward and sideways.

But what instantly strikes you is the display of swinging signs. These hang, creaking, vast, and menacing, from every weak and bulging wall, providing for strangers the only available method of direction on their lawful occasions. They are of every colour and design—black bulls, golden lambs, red cows, bottles, hanging swords, devils' noses, and what not. If they were designed to

direct, they succeed better in confusing the stranger within the gates. Nor does the noise tend to lessen that confusion. To the horrid creaking of a thousand signs, swinging in the wind, is added the ceaseless din of wheels, coaches and wagons rumbling over the crazy cobbles, splashing the unwary sightseer with mud, at the malicious humour of the driver. Yet these mingled sounds are not loud enough to drown the raucous roaring of the shopkeepers and their apprentices whose goods are displayed under rudely roofed pent-houses clamped to the house walls and, as often as not, overflow on to the pavement. "Come, buy, gentles." "What d'ye lack, what lack?"

Street Life

The stately manners of Whitehall you must not expect to find. If you show the least sign of strangeness or rusticity, a dozen blackguards will mark you down as lawful prey; and while one offers to sell you an authentic relic of the Martyr Charles, another will relieve you of your pocket-handkerchief, or shoulder you into a heap of offal from sheer lightness of heart. You will certainly come upon a group of roughs playing football in the street, for that was a common sight in the middle of the seventeenth century.

Between the roadway and the houses posts driven in at regular intervals form some kind of protection for foot passengers. To these posts, however, saddle-horses are sometimes tethered. Billstickers are at work upon others, "posting" the programmes of the playhouses. Then, as now,

all conditions of men rub shoulders with you. Then, but not now, the vilest haunts of vice and crime clustered together in the dark and noisome courts and alleys that lead out of Fleet Street. The seeds of learning and education flowered from the dung heap, and classic literature was printed under the roofs of disorderly houses.

The Taverns

The taverns of Fleet Street were as famous as its Inns of Court and its printing presses. No. 1, the first house that met your gaze, was the famous, or infamous, "Devil Tavern," beloved of Ben Jonson. It is now obliterated by the respectable façade of Child's Bank; when it flourished it was but one of dozens of taverns, of which the "Cock," the "King's Head," the "Pope's Head," the "Mitre" and the "Cheshire Cheese" are, perhaps, the most famous. And the taverns helped to make the crowd in Fleet Street varied and interesting. For the tavern, as Macaulay has pointed out, was in those days by far the greatest force in social life. In the eyes of foreigners it was this that distinguished London from all other cities; "it was the Londoner's home, and those who wished to find a gentleman commonly asked, not whether he lived in Fleet Street or Chancery Lane, but whether he frequented the 'Grecian' or the 'Rainbow.'"

It is easy to trace the growth (late in Dr. Johnson's day) of the club idea from the tavern or coffee-house, when it is realized that every man of the upper and middle classes went daily hither to learn and discuss the news. Here congregated

the "journalist" of the day in search of "copy," rumour, and epigrams; hither came, as to his consulting room, the fashionable doctor and the quack, the orator and pamphleteer, the fop and the wit; the poets and literary men formed their circle round the star of the day, Jonson or Dryden; and men of every calling met their chosen companions, as a matter of daily routine, to discuss the admirable fare universally provided. Ned Ward, author of *The London Spy*, never failed to do justice to the tavern dinner, ushered in "with a whet of old Hock," headed by a first course of "two calves' heads and a couple of geese," and ended with "a stately Cheshire cheese of a groaning size." And then, quick as lightning, the crockery was swept away and the business of drinking, toasting, and talking began. And as the sack went round the oaths "flew like squibs and crackers in Cheapside."

The Temple

But our business is sightseeing, and we must resist the blandishments of the tavern doors. Instead of entering the "Rainbow," close against Temple gateway, we will take a preliminary peep into that stately domain of the law and, skirting the famous round church of the Templars, mingle with the great crowd that throngs King's Bench Walk. Here mix in confusion all sorts and conditions of men and women, hardly worthy of their setting, the broadwalk with its background of sober, mellow, red brick, and its large and shady garden, bright with flowerbeds (from which long

since the rival roses of the Houses of Lancaster and York were plucked), and its glorious prospect southward of the river, a cluster of red roofs on the farther bank and, beyond, the green fields and blue hills of Surrey.

Resolute, indeed, was the young barrister who made good in that company, which included gamesters and confidence tricksters, spies for the Fleet Warden and Marshal of the King's Bench, touts and down-and-outs, bullies and gay ladies, blackmailers and country clients, wolves and sheep. But we shall see more of the Temple in due course, and must return to the din of Fleet Street. As you press on eastward your eyes are irresistibly drawn to all the turnings on the right; from every window and doorway, theft, whoredom, homicide, and blasphemy peer out at you. For here

Alsatia

is Alsatia, the area round Salisbury Court, a living hell and safe sanctuary for murderer and debtor alike. The civil power dared not follow them hither. "At the cry of 'Rescue!' bullies with swords and cudgels, and termagant hags with spits and broomsticks poured forth by hundreds; and the intruder was fortunate if he escaped back into Fleet Street, hustled, stripped, and pumped on." Thus Macaulay. A little farther on and you get a glimpse of a grim, vast edifice, once the Royal Palace of Bridewell, but now an infamous house of correction wherein, if you will, you may watch the flogging (a daily routine) of criminals of both sexes.

The governor sits there, in open court, a

hammer in his hand, and watches the flogging of scores of half-naked wretches. At a whim, he drops his hammer and the whip comes to rest; and "Oh, good Sir Robert, knock," became for years an insulting phrase, as who should say, "Yah! gaol bird."

Fleet Market

And so the street of noise and filth and adventure ends at Fleet Bridge, a stone erection with sides breast high adorned with the City arms. Beyond it, halfway up Ludgate Hill, the dark and menacing Lud Gate stands, still guarding with walls and fortresses the approach to the City proper. In a niche in the façade is a statue of Queen Elizabeth, which we shall see elsewhere.

The Fleet River which our bridge crosses is still, in theory, navigable as high as Holborn; yet in fact it is but slime and stench and refuse; the great coal wharves are empty, and an unofficial market adds confusion to the river banks, the yards and wharves of Bridewell Palace, and the bridge itself.

Here the lowest class of hawker stands beside his wheeled barrow and will sell you anything from gingerbread, oranges, and oysters to "socks and furmity, nightcaps, and plum-pudding."

You may return along the north side of the street if you will, but you must return alone.

For myself I will leave you here, vowing that, though it be my practice as a journalist to decry the age in which I live, I am inclined to think there is none for which I would willingly exchange it.

This, then, is a little picture of Restoration Fleet Street. I need not apologize that it is cribbed from many sources. Macaulay drew copiously on Ned Ward, the Norths and Stow for the famous Chapter III of his history (which every schoolboy who comes star-gazing in London should read), and I, who live after Macaulay, crib Ward and Stow and Timbs and Macaulay and Hare and Lucas and Beresford Chancellor. And because they are dead or more famous than I, because they have acted just as I have, they doubtless heed me not.

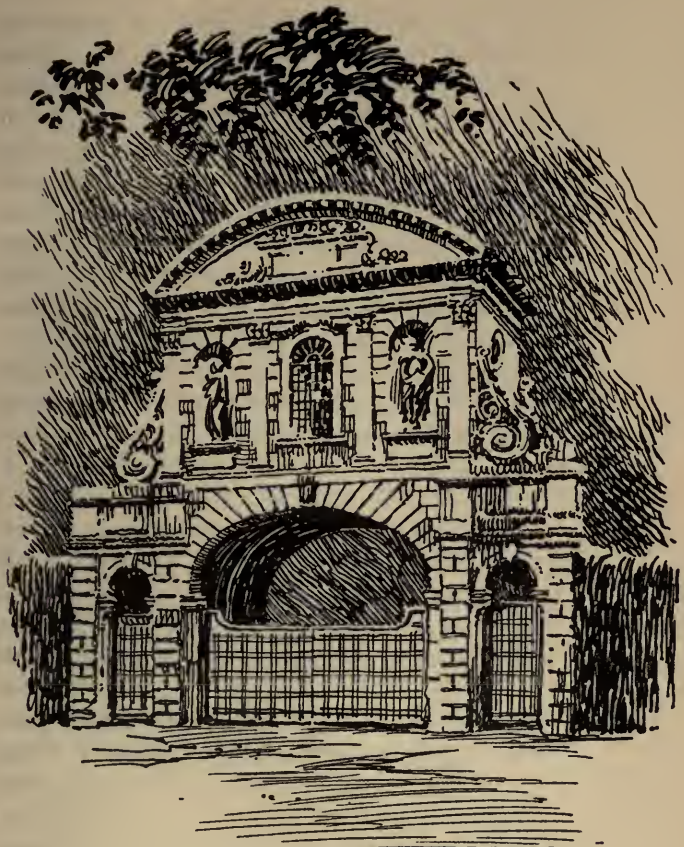
After the Fire was over and the first despair forgotten, they builded the City again with amazing speed, nowhere more swiftly than in Fleet Street.

Wren's Gatehouse

Wren's new and nobler gateway was erected at Temple Bar (the old one was not destroyed by the Fire) in 1670. Its façades were adorned with the statues of Stuart Princes, and the iron spikes of its gate not seldom with human heads, late into the eighteenth century. Beside the gate was the pillory in which Titus Oates and the excellent Defoe stood in turn. Wren's gate was not taken down till 1878, and may still be viewed at Theobald's Park, near Cheshunt, where it is preserved. This new gate, with its three arches, gave on to a wider street, better cobbled (at first, at any rate).

The Rebuilding

The houses, rebuilt, set back and in every way made more secure by the use of brick for timber, seemed to have lost all their picturesqueness; chiefly from the fact that swinging signs, though



OLD TEMPLE BAR
NOW AT THEOBALD'S PARK

Joseph Pine 1927

not by law abolished until 1760, were now very much less in evidence, being largely replaced by more discreet methods of direction, and this changed the character of the place.

The churches destroyed by the Fire were restored or rebuilt ; a new and smaller Bridewell replaced the old Palace. But the old courts and alleys preserved their identity despite the vast scale of rebuilding and the nobler town planning. The Fire purged our area of a vast amount of disease-breeding filth, and permanently let in some much needed light and air. But the dens of vice and crime were not extinguished. In the very nature of the emergency the murderers and thieves and debtors crept back to the ruins of their homes, and in a decade life went on very much as usual. Lighting and policing had improved, houses were more substantial, the main street was wider; but the picture of life in Fleet Street just before the Fire would not be a very cruel caricature of its life in 1676. It was sixty years later that Dr. Johnson first saw Fleet Street, and, if we may believe the experts, he, too, would have then experienced many of the discomforts and horrors I have enumerated.

CHAPTER IV

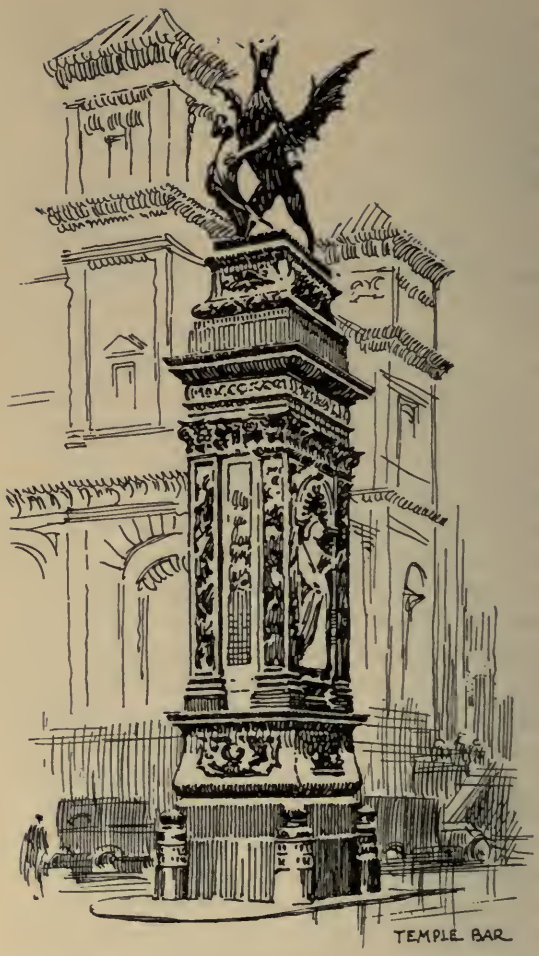
The Walk Begins: Child's Bank—The Templars—Coming of the Lawyers

But now it is high time to begin our sightseeing in Fleet Street, and, since we must work on some sort of plan, let us agree to start from Temple Bar, to walk eastward along the south side and to suffer ourselves to be checked and seduced by every intriguing door, alley or lane to which we come. From its eastern end we will pursue the same plan along its northern side till we come back to Temple Bar at last.

Child's Bank

No. 1, the first building that claims our attention, is the modern home of the oldest banking house in London, Child's. With these few square yards of Fleet Street the Childs have been connected since 1677, at which date the firm of Blanchard and Child, goldsmiths, leased the premises of the "Marygold" eating-house, which adjoined and spread over Temple Bar gate-house.

Ten years later Childs acquired the adjoining old "Devil Tavern," to which we have referred as a haunt of Ben Jonson, and erected a new block of houses, and here the bank became famous and the Childs grew rich and important, doing an old-fashioned family business in an old-fashioned and extremely dingy, inconvenient shop, and getting


TEMPLE BAR

to know most of the skeletons in the cupboards of our noble houses. Their records are amusing reading, their ducal clients sometimes revealing in correspondence a truly aristocratic contempt for *meum* and *tuum*, and I doubt not that the first quality required of one of Child's clerks was tact, for among their clients have been the Merry Monarch, Prince Rupert and Monmouth, Lady Castlemaine and Nell Gwynne, Pepys, Chaffinch, Marlborough, Dryden, and Walpole; and inside you will find memorials of many of these.

With tact and industry the Childs grew rich, and none was more respected than Robert Child, head of the firm in 1780. If you would know what the bank was like in that year you should read Dickens's *Tale of Two Cities*, wherein Child's bank is the original of Tellson's.

A Runaway Match

It was a dingy little row of "shops," overshadowed by Wren's gateway upon which it abutted, and wealthy Sir Robert, owner of Osterley Park, vast wealth and a thousand valuable secrets, seemed to demean himself by his devotion to business in so base a setting. Here in the manner of the day he worked and ate his meals and often slept, and here, it is said, he entertained the handsome young Lord Westmorland and lightheartedly advised him in general terms that a youth who loved a girl and could not obtain her parent's consent should "run away with her, to be sure!"

Sir Robert's own load of trouble was not great wealth alone; he had a lovely and wayward

daughter whom, unknown to the banker, Lord Westmorland loved for the brightness of her eyes and her father's guineas. And he took the banker at foot of the letter and ran off with Miss Child to Gretna. More than that, he shot the banker's lead-horse when the pursuit became too hot, and it was Miss Child who urged him to that impious act, crying, "Shoot, my lord, shoot!" To a daughter of their marriage, Sarah Fane, Lady Jersey (she who refused the Duke of Wellington admission to Almack's for a breach of dress regulations), the Child fortune came, and until the other day the head of the house of Villiers, descendants of the runaway match, possessed important interests in the bank. Incidentally, Lady Jersey treated her parents as they had treated poor Sir Robert and made a bolt with Jersey. I have dwelt long on a picturesque, but irrelevant, romance, and ask pardon on personal grounds.

One feature of their romantic marriage Lord Westmorland and Miss Child did not anticipate. It destined them to become the writer's great-great-grandparents, and accounts for his interest in No. 1.

The Temple

Our next divergence from Fleet Street will be down Middle Temple Lane and under the fine gateway erected upon Fleet Street by Wren in 1684.

This divergence will enable us to view all the interesting features in the Middle Temple and carry us back to Fleet Street by way of the Inner

Temple and Inner Temple Lane, with its still more ancient gate-house.

But before we start on the Middle Temple we must say a word or two about the origins of these Inns of Court and describe the foundation of the famous Temple Church, which, though it stands on Inner Temple property, is in the joint possession of the two Inns.

Templars

Early in the twelfth century a body of soldier knights was organized, by the encouragement of Baldwin II, to protect and assist pilgrims of all Christian nations bound for Jerusalem. They were at first non-military, and were distinguished by the wearing of a white mantle with a red cross on the left breast. They proved, however, courageous as well as charitable, and rendered great military service during the Crusades. Their power increased and with power came wealth. They began to found religious houses. About 1130 they established themselves in England with headquarters in Holborn.

In 1184 they removed to this portion of our area, on which their new round church was already nearing completion. Its architectural features and history we will refer to again when we return by Inner Temple Lane. The following year their church was dedicated by Heraclius, Patriarch of Jerusalem, while visiting this country in a futile endeavour to interest Henry II in the Crusades. An inscription, transcribed inside the church, records this dedication.

But power and wealth brought trouble to the Templars, and one of the greatest miscarriages of justice in history resulted in the abolition of the order by Clement V in 1312. In England their property reverted to the Crown, and Edward II bestowed it upon the Earl of Pembroke. Soon after his death it again reverted to the Crown, and was bestowed, like much of the Templars' property, on the Knights of St. John, a right of way for the public down Inner Temple Lane to the Temple River Steps being reserved in the grant.

The Lawyers Come In

Law students come first into the picture early in the reign of Edward III, at whose instance the Knights leased the premises, or part of them, to students of law, who had formerly pursued their studies under the wing of the Church and in the shadow of the cathedrals.

There is very little record of events and happenings in the Temple between the reign of Edward III and Henry VIII. It was sacked during the Wat Tyler Rebellion in 1381, and the books and property of the lawyers were burned in Fleet Street, and there is a tradition that Chaucer was a student here about the middle of the century, and more than a tradition that the budding lawyers were a rowdy, turbulent tribe who harried the honest shopkeepers of Fleet Street, breaking heads and the law they pretended to woo. In this dark period the two societies became distinct bodies, as we learn from the *Paston Letters*, and by 1506 each society had begun to keep elaborate records

of progress and development and personnel. In Henry VIII's reign the turn of the Knights of St. John came. The order was dissolved, and the Temple reverted to the Crown.

But the dissolution of the order did not affect the continuity of legal studies. The tenancy of the two societies was continued, and in the year 1608 James I granted the Temple to them jointly, subject to a rent from each body of £10 per annum. The Crown reserved the right to nominate the Master of the Temple (Church), a right which it still exercises. In 1673 the unrestricted freehold became vested in the societies.

Student Life, 1670-1700

The best picture we have of the life of the students just after the Great Fire is derived from the autobiography of Roger North, of that great family of lawyers.

Roger was one of a large family, very carefully educated and strictly brought up. He was admitted to the Middle Temple in 1669 at the age of sixteen. In those days the probationary period was far longer than now; seven years of exercises in some Inn preceded the right to be called, and then three more years must pass before the new-fledged barrister might plead. Law's serious call, indeed!

Roger tells us his more illustrious brother would spend his mornings in the study of Year Books, "taking a repast" in Lyttelton, Stamford, Crompton, Coke's Pleas of the Crown, Manwood on Forest Law, and another dusty dozen, transcribing in commonplace books important passages. Coke

upon Lyttelton he considered too exciting for a serious-minded student !

After a full eight-hour day thus passed it was his habit to discharge the day's acquirements upon his friends over a chop, and was renowned as a "put-case," and thereafter he wandered in the Temple cloisters, practising his terrible recreation on all and sundry. The round church was at this time a sort of stock exchange of the law, where popular barristers stood, each beside his wonted pillar, and gave wise counsel and lent an arrogant ear to country clients; and here, too, the students congregated in pursuit of knowledge or mischief.

The student was also required to take part in frequent "moots" or mock actions, arranged by their Inn and presided over by selected readers. The students recited the pleadings, and then benchers and barristers formally argued the case, after which "all parties return to the cupboard, where the moot-men present the benchers with a cup of beer and a slice of bread."

Ned Ward, in his *London Spy*, tells us how he wandered into the Temple and turned into "a cloister or piazza where a parcel of grave blades, gowned and banded, with green sacks in their hands, were busily talking alphabetically about A marrying B ; how they begat two sons, C and D . . ." After learning that "it was their method of stating a case," he "left them debating the weighty difference between John of Oakes and John of Stiles."

Roger was a bit of a prig and unco' guid, but virtue paid, as I will show you. At a time when (as Macaulay states) £2,000 a year could hardly be made by private practice, Roger shows that his practice (mostly in the Court of Chancery) brought him in, in two successive years, £4,000 per annum. The greatest fee he ever received was 20 guineas. Ten was extraordinary, two to three normal, and one was the fee for motions and defences. *Virtue Rewarded*

Guildford as Attorney-General made £7,000 in one year. The fees were, of course, paid in cash, and Guildford (Roger tells us) used to collect them in three skull caps, "which he wore when he had leisure to observe his constitution"; one for gold, another for crowns and half-crowns, and the third for smaller moneys. Roger himself often sorted them out for his brother, put them up in bags, and carried them over to his brother's bankers, our old friends "Blanchard and Child, goldsmiths at Temple Bar."

The lot of the young barrister in court was anything but an enviable one. He had no seat provided for him in Westminster Hall, and was forced to conduct his case standing upon the floor in the crowd, while some of the learned leaders, such as (Chief Justice) Saunders, were usually drunk, invariably stank, and never rose to speak or cross-examine without having constant recourse to a pot of ale or a brandy flask on the desk before them.

I don't want to leave a false impression in this

brief sketch of Temple life at the end of the seventeenth century. The student's day was not all law book and mock trials before the benchers. The Temple was famous for its masques and dances and frivolities; for its plays and revels and rags; for its dice and drinking and disorderly behaviour on both sides of the Fleet Street gateways. The strait and up-hill path, leading to the golden gate, was by no means easy to follow in those days. Many were the daughters of pleasure who frequented King's Bench Walk each day, with dummy pleadings in their hands, seeking among the greenhorns profit and pleasure under the cloak of justice.

Temple Fires

The Temple, as we know, was partially destroyed in the Great Fire of 1666. It suffered three more most serious fires before 1703.

That of 1679, which started in the chambers of Mr. Thornbury, of Pump Court, through the falling of a piece of "sea-coal," was disastrous. The water was frozen in the pipes, and a great part of both Inns was utterly destroyed.

All the northern part of Middle Temple was destroyed, and of the Inner the cloisters and Hare Court; the hall was blown up to prevent the fire spreading south.

In those days and, of course, for long after, the benchers and barristers lived in their chambers, and the whole question of rebuilding at once became acute and acrimonious. For the benchers, who had bagged all the plums from the grant

secured from James I, were at drawn swords with the younger members of the Bar.

The work was ultimately begun by a famous Fleet Street character and contractor yclept Unless-Jesus-had-died-for-thee-thou-hadst-been-damned Barebone, more shortly Damned Barebone, introduced by Roger himself, and, Barebone throwing in his hand, was finished at the expense of the Inn. There exists a sketch by Roger North of the entrance to Pump Court which shows it exactly as it is today. Reading North's account, it seems a miracle that it was ever rebuilt. So feverishly anxious were benchers, barristers, and students alike for some shelter for their heads, that as fast as the building materials were dumped in the precincts they were hurried away by the lawyers, each dragging his spoils to the site of his own ruined chambers.

THE SIGN OF "THE SHIP & STAR" AT RADFORDS TOBACCONISTS, WINE OFFICE COURT.

BRICK COURT
TEMPLE.
Joseph Pike

CHAPTER V

Middle Temple—Inner Temple—The Temple Church

We now take our promised turn down Middle Temple Lane under Wren's excellent arch, in the style of Inigo Jones, erected in 1684 at the expense of the Inn.

Except its unique eighteenth-century appearance, nothing need claim our attention as we walk down the lane until we come to Brick Court.

Brick Court and Goldsmith

This court contains some of the oldest brickwork in the Temple, dating from the middle of the sixteenth century; the majority of it, however, belongs to the beginning of the eighteenth century, and the north side, as will be apparent, is more modern.

The fame of Brick Court rests on its association with Oliver Goldsmith. At No. 2, in the "two pair right" chambers indicated by a medallion, this much-loved and feckless man of letters, "who wrote like an angel and talked like poor Poll," lived from 1768 until his death in the dark little cupboard of a bedroom in 1774.

You may picture him here entertaining Johnson, Boswell, Burke, Reynolds and the rest to a scratch banquet, showing off his new clothes and furniture, and framing suitable replies to the polite requests of the studious Blackstone, who lived immediately below him, to make less noise.

Or you can picture him watching his beloved rooks in the Inner Temple Garden and wondering in what miraculous guise the price of his next meal would reach him. His rent, luckily, he had "paid in advance," with his makings by *The Good-tempered Man*.

Or you may picture the cheap coffin bumping the corners of the narrow stairs, and the group of friends waiting outside to follow it on its last journey of eighty yards or so—Reynolds, with tears rolling down his cheeks, and Burke, blowing his nose, and Johnson, muttering to himself and scratching his head, were without doubt on the outer fringe of that crowd of old women and dependants and beggars who pestered him in life; the official mourner, however, was Reynolds's nephew, and the heirs were patient creditors to the tune of £2,000.

We shall find the stone that marks the *probable* site of his grave beside the Temple Church (how frail, indeed, is human memory !). Thackeray also lived in No. 2 for six years from 1853, during which he bought the experiences which he made use of in *Pendennis*. The sundial in the court has many honoured associations.

Middle Temple Hall

We pass on to Fountain Court and take a look at Middle Temple Hall, one of the finest Tudor halls in existence, built between 1560 and 1570, and opened by Queen Elizabeth in 1576. The entrance tower is modern and the stone casing dates from the eighteenth century, but inside, the

TEMPLE HALL

hall retains many of its original beauties. You will note the hammer-beam roof, and the screen of carved oak, and the stained glass windows with their coats-of-arms, all original work. The receipts for £20 paid to the carver of those glorious doors are in the archives of the Society. Nor will you miss the fine tables. The high table Queen Elizabeth gave to the benchers; the serving table was made from the timbers of Drake's immortal "Golden Hind" and sailed the Pacific in the days when the sight of American tourists in Fleet Street was less common than today and Raleigh's black servant represented the season's American invasion. By the light of the brass lantern under the minstrel gallery you may fairly picture the serene figure of Shakespeare directing, on February 2, 1602, a final rehearsal of his *Twelfth Night*.

That Shakespeare knew the inside of the hall is reasonably certain, for he refers to it in *Henry IV*. It is, indeed, a hall of splendid memories and splendid dignity, and you will agree with me that those who care for it are not unworthy of their heirloom.

Fountain, Essex, and New Courts

Fountain Court is charming on a summer day and redolent of Dickens. But you all know your *Martin Chuzzlewit* a deal better than I.

Essex Court retains much of the original architecture of the seventeenth century. It owes its name to the great Essex House in the Strand, and is chiefly interesting because John Evelyn, the

GATEWAY TO THE TEMPLE
FROM DEVEREUX COURT
Joseph Pike

diarist, records it as the place of his first lodgings. New Court was part of Wren's rebuilding scheme to the order of the benchers, and has a pleasant entrance from Devereux Court.

I shall not trouble you with Garden Court, nor invite you to proceed farther down Middle Temple Lane. We will return, if you please, to Wren's gateway and visit the courts on the east side of Middle Temple Lane.

Inner Temple Hare Court and Lamb

Hare Court will interest you if you are well up in Lamb's letters. He looked out from one of his lodgings "upon a gloomy churchyard-like court, called Hare Court, with three trees and a pump in it. I was born near it, and used to drink at that pump when I was a Rechabite of six years old." You, too, will wish to pause before the source of Lamb's inspiration.

With Pump, Elm, and Figtree Courts there is nothing of first importance connected. Elm Court is modernized; Figtree is dark, but early seventeenth century.

Pump Court gives a pleasing prospect through the cloisters; both were rebuilt by the Inn after the fire of 1678-9, and are seen today as Roger North sketched them. Fielding, the novelist, lived for some years in Pump Court.

Lamb in Crown Office Row

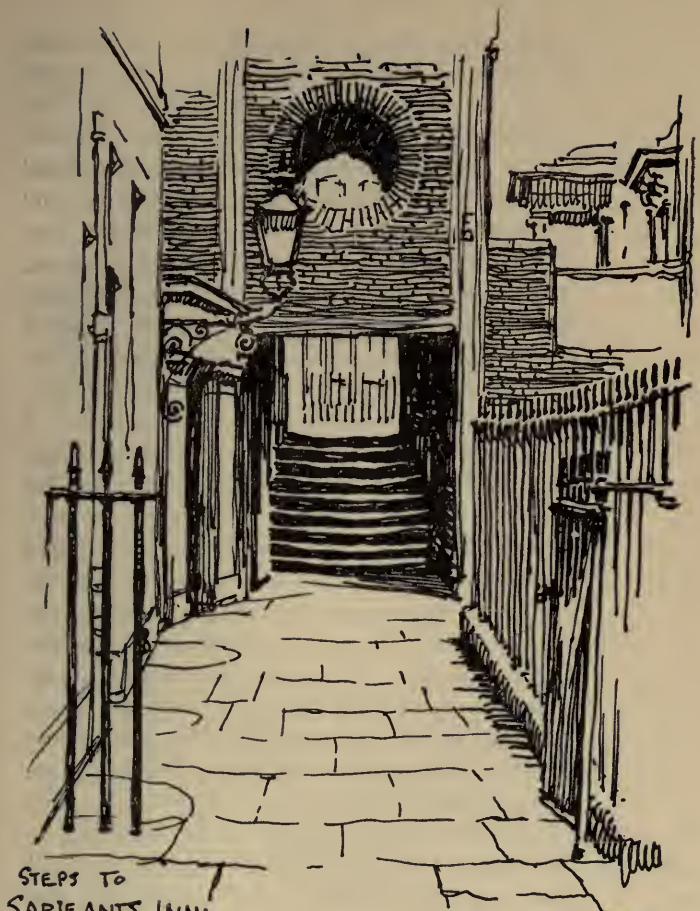
Our last left turn from Middle Temple Lane takes us into Crown Office Row, for ever associated with the name of Charles Lamb. The building is modernized and not worth inspection, but the view is the same view which Elia raved

about. He played in the garden, passed through the selfsame gate, and knew every inch of the backwater in which he was born in 1775. You can imagine how lovely must then have been the view across the lawn to the great river studded with sails, the red roofs and hamlets beyond, and the pleasant green fields sloping up to the blue hills of Surrey in the distance. Like Goldsmith, he must have watched and loved the clamorous colony of rooks, and I daresay he made a bogey of the sundial, the kneeling Moor, which has been in the garden since 1707.

The view has altered, and the architecture of the Victorian age has spoilt the charm of the place, but Crown Office Row is still the cheerful row that Lamb found it. Needless to add, Thackeray, who assiduously followed in the steps of his great predecessors, lived here also. There are, of course, memories connected with the building which has been replaced by the present Paper Buildings. The original pile was totally destroyed in the Great Fire, and that which replaced it in 1685 ran a great way down to the Thames, having on its eastern side as noble a space as the garden on its western. That eastern side was King's Bench Walk, now restricted in size.

King's Bench Walk

King's Bench Walk is, you will agree, still charming. Nos. 4 and 5, for which Wren was responsible, date from the rebuilding after the fire of 1677. It is worth while to examine the façade in detail.


STEPS TO
SARJEANTS INN.
FROM MITRE COURT
J. PIKE

The walk was for centuries the rendezvous of all and sundry, whether concerned with the law or not, whether on business or pleasure.

Lord Mansfield, as a rising young barrister, lived at No. 5, and here Pope visited him, as did more than once the imperious Duchess of Marlborough. Goldsmith had rooms here for a time in 1765, and Daines Barrington, the correspondent of Gilbert White on bird matters, died in No. 6 in 1800. Strangely enough, the only proof which the Temple records of his ornithological genius is that he had the sparrows poisoned in the Temple Garden.

Mitre Court

In Mitre Court Buildings Charles and Mary Lamb lived in an attic for nine years, but the present building is since their time.

We retrace our steps. The library is modern and contains a hundred thousand dusty tomes, into many of which I have yawningly dipped. Dive into the tunnel beyond and emerge into Tanfield Court. On the east side is the charming "Lamb" Building, named from the badge of the Templars. As for the Inner Temple Hall, modern as it seems, there are woven into it relics as old as the Temple Church.

The Temple Church

And now we come to that incomparable monument, the largest of the round churches in this country. There are but five in all, and the smallest, I think, is at Cambridge. They are all copied from the Holy Sepulchre. As we have seen, the round portion of the church was

LAMB BUILDINGS
INNER TEMPLE
J. PIKE

consecrated in 1185, soon after the Templars moved hither from Holborn.

Through the porch, till lately a well-preserved remnant of the old cloisters, and a splendid recessed Norman archway, you enter the Round Church, simple and yet rich in the Late Norman style.

The choir, which is Early English, was added in 1240, and shows the advance of the pointed style —an exquisite testimony. In both parts of the church the scheme of support is clustered columns of Purbeck marble. But you shall listen to a notable passage from the historian Froude, a champion of the Templars :

The Crusaders

"The Templars were famous for the beauty of their churches, and this particular church, now that the old pews have been cleared out, is almost in the condition in which they left it. In the antechapel there lie on the floor the figures of nine warriors, represented, not as dead or asleep, but reclining, as they might have reclined in life, modelled all of them with the highest contemporary art, figures that have only to rise to their feet to stand before us as they actually were when quick and breathing on earth. The originals of them, if they are rightly named, were not themselves Templars : they were great barons and statesmen. But they were associates of the order, and in dress and appearance doubtless closely resembled them. They are extremely noble figures.

> Pride is in every line of their features, in every undulation of their forms; but it is not base, personal pride. There is the spirit in them of the soldier, the spirit of the saint, the spirit of the feudal ruler, and the spirit of the Catholic Church."

Neither church nor monuments are, in fact, in the condition in which the Templars left them. That could hardly be. The church was terrifically restored in the 1830's by that Smirke whose footsteps we have followed in our pilgrimage.

Much of the original stone has been replaced, and many of the sculptured heads between the columns are but copies of the humorous, lively originals. Moreover, many of the monuments have been moved and the decoration of the ceiling is entirely modern.

But it is right and proper that you should get your facts red hot and on the spot from the intelligent janitors. They will label for you the nine noble knights. I know not what degree of proof exists of the identity of any, but I feel rather sure that one or two of them are, indeed, proud Mareschalls, Earls of Pembroke, who were intimately associated with the Temple in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

You must get the janitor also to paint for you a picture of the Round Church in the seventeenth century, thronged with lawyers and blackguards, each at his jealously guarded pitch, interviewing

such pigeons as were fit to be plucked, and pursuing their lawful or unlawful occupations, like members of the Stock Exchange. And, finally, insist on hearing the rich story of the Judgment of the Organs, and how—characteristically—bloody Jeffreys, as Lord Chancellor, gave judgment in Smith *v.* Harris.

Outside the church once more you will keep beside the railings to the right and pay your respects to the stone that marks the probable site of Goldsmith's grave, and take a glance at the Master's pleasant middle-eighteenth-century house in its quiet little close.

Inner Temple Lane

Turning back again you are looking at Inner Temple Lane, which is bitterly disappointing. For its ponderous architecture has left not a vestige of the picturesque or the romantic. Yet no spot in London is richer in great traditions.

Johnson

No. 1, or Doctor Johnson's Buildings, stands on the site of the chambers in which, on the first floor, Johnson lived from 1760 to 1766. As we shall find later, when we view Gough Square, he had here the amenity of an attic with space for his books and a fine view of St. Paul's. This view we can no longer see from the points where Dr. Johnson saw it. But a view of St. Paul's not less glorious and very much of the same aspect can still be seen, and must not be missed by any lover of the picturesque and romantic. Choose, if you can, a fine June evening about 6 o'clock and walk eastward down Fleet Street when the sun

OLIVER GOLDSMITH
GOLDSMITH'S TOMB
TEMPLE
J. PIKE.

is gradually sinking behind you, colouring the little clouds that fleck the sky and throwing a mellow, radiant light on all distant objects. Halfway down the street, you will suddenly observe one of the world's most famous views—St. Paul's Cathedral crowning Ludgate Hill, set high and magical above the turmoil of the streets. Then indeed its "cloud-capped towers, its solemn temples, the great globe itself" are changed and etherialized and the sight does not fail to leave a lasting impression.

Boswell has left a record of his first visit to Johnson at No. 1. Chambers and owner alike were shabby, untidy, and down at heel. But the man whose ordinary dress was a rusty-brown morning suit, breeches flapping loose at the knee, and a little shrivelled wig perched on his huge head, was able with the charm of his conversation to make of his dingy den Olympus, and his greasy rags the shining armour of a god.

Lamb

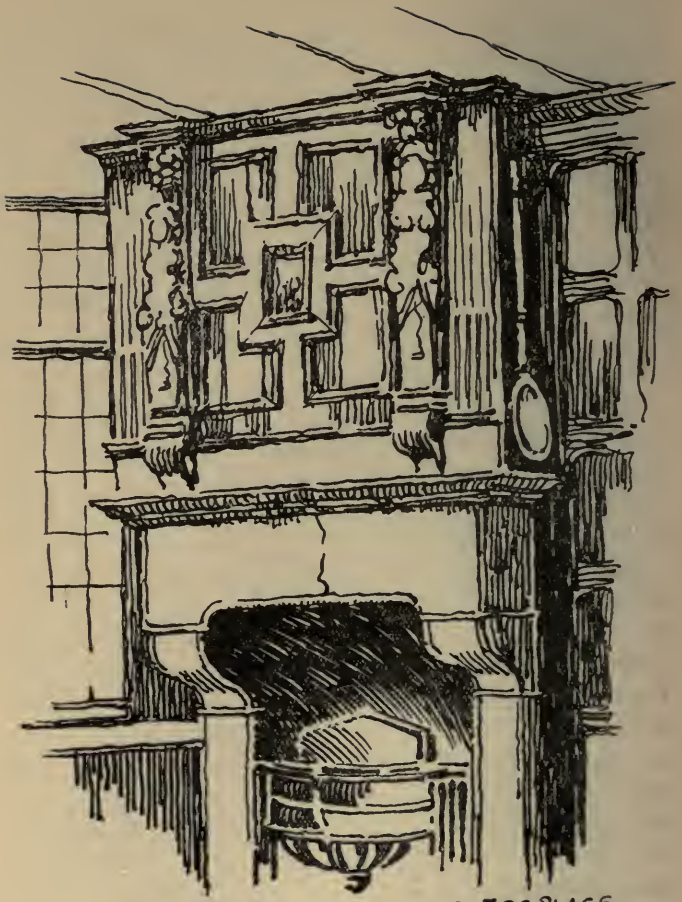
At No. 4, in the top floors, were written Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare*. The rooms, you remember, looked out at the back upon Hare Court, whose trees came into the window for all the world like the country. Here Elia and his sister lived eight years from 1809 in a rabbit-warren of small rooms.

William Cowper, the poet, during one of his most melancholy moods, lived in Inner Temple Lane, devising not seldom plans for self-destruction.

I admit that Inner Temple Lane has always

No. 17 FLEET STREET
Containing the historic
PRINCE HENRY'S ROOM · A.D. 1610

disappointed me. It is so soulless, so remote from its rich past, that even its most faithful ghosts have fled. You must pass out into Fleet Street again under the gateway and turn to look up at the façade. It is a charming relic of very early seventeenth-century domestic architecture, which has not suffered by restoration. It is worth your while to go up a flight of stairs and look at Prince Henry's room—it will cost you nothing but breath. The beautiful Jacobean ceiling is worth looking at. You will see the Prince of Wales's crest is the central feature. This room was almost certainly the Council Chamber of the Duchy of Cornwall, and Prince Henry was James I's eldest son. The panelling on the western wall is original and very fine. You should look at the prints hung in the room, if you like to picture Old London as it was. Altogether the gate-house is worthy of all that we have just seen.



OLD FIREPLACE
AT THE COCK INN.

CHAPTER VI

Alsatia, Salisbury Court, St. Bride's and Bridewell

The Cock Tavern, hard by, is immortalized in Pepys's Diary and in the works of Tennyson, but no longer crows on its original dung-heap, from which it was banished by the Bank of England building across the road. *The "Cock"*

It was a famous and jolly, if shabby, ale-house, both before and after the Great Fire, and its modern shell contains many original fittings and relics, including a mantel of James I's reign. Pepys, Johnson, Tennyson and the inevitable Thackeray were all patrons of the house.

Our next halt is before No. 37, Hoare's Bank, the work of that Smirke who had so free a hand in the Temple. It stands on the site of the famous Mitre Tavern, beloved of the Johnsonians. Hoare's Bank is steeped in tradition. The founder of the firm may or may not have come to London to seek his fortunes with no other asset but a leather bottle, now depicted in their golden sign. It is probable that he got into the banking business very much at the same time and in the same manner as his neighbour Child. A James Hore was doing the "running-cash" business in 1677 at a "Golden Bottle" in Cheapside. And very soon the firm was engaged for the Government, *Hoare's Bank*

THE SIGN OF
THE GOLDEN BOTTLE
AT Nº 37.

SERJEANTS' INN

not only on making advances for Marlborough's wars, but in minting money besides. The Hoares did their turns as Alderman and Mayor, and one, Sir Richard, did good work as Mayor in the panic year 1745 when Charles Edward reached Derby. There is a sepulchre of several of these civic-dignitary Hoares in St. Dunstan's. The golden sign is most probably the not uncommon sign adopted by coopers or vintners, doubtless an early trade of the family.

You may take a look into the gloomy Mitre Court, which Mr. Pike has idealized, and enter Serjeants Inn a little farther on.

Serjeants Inn

This Serjeants Inn had less claim to the name and its distinction than its brother in Chancery Lane, adjoining Clifford's Inn. So far as records go back, it was an appanage of the Dean and Chapter of York, and it may be accepted as fairly accurate that, by much the same demises as we recorded in the Temple, it became about 1440 a centre of legal studies and life and a headquarters of certain judges and serjeants-at-law. The lawyers persisted here despite many vicissitudes until the Great Fire, which completely destroyed the Inn. Thereafter it was built up again in 1669, at the charges of five judges and ten serjeants, and in 1670 a new sixty-year lease was obtained, apparently from York Diocese.

But soon after, the lawyers abandoned the Inn and migrated to the rival in Chancery Lane. Commerce thereupon stepped in and Adam erected

a frontage to Fleet Street for an assurance company which was succeeded by the present Norwich Union. There are some pleasant old houses in the backwater behind this gateway, and you can see the date 1669 on one of them. Mr. Chancellor gives some interesting points about Serjeants Inn. For example, it forms a parish in itself, making its own assessments and contributing to the City rates; its pavement was formed from stonework of old St. Paul's; it illuminated itself with oil lamps long after London generally had adopted gas; and that famous editor of the *Times*, Delane, lived at No. 16 for thirty years, and pulled a thousand strings in the quiet environment of his panelled rooms in the very heart of Fleet Street.

Alsatia

We now resume our walk eastward and keep our eyes open for names mighty in journalism. For five hundred years men who walked in the area of Bouverie Street, Whitefriars Street and Salisbury Court have wisely kept their eyes open. For what is now the area devoted to the printing and production of a great number of famous journals was, until two hundred years ago, that most notorious den of crime and vice known as Alsatia, which Scott immortalized in *The Fortunes of Nigel.*

I shall not myself conduct you in detail round these streets and lanes that run down to the Thames on the south, and on the east reach to St. Bride's Church. If you love to watch the busy life of the newspaper world you can

MITRA
FLEET STREET

THE MITRE
THE MITRE
JOSEPH PIKE 1927

find no likelier place in which to satisfy your craving.

The ancient history and origin of Alsatia is briefly thus: In the reign of Edward I, a body of Carmelite Friars was established by Sir Ralph Gray and acquired land running roughly north and south of Tudor Street and between Bouverie and New Bridge Streets. The order grew rich and prospered, and its buildings were noble and covered considerable ground. In its chapel John of Gaunt lay in state, and other records tell of its importance. The precincts, as was usual, enjoyed the right of sanctuary, and doubtless the neighbourhood seemed a judicious place of retirement to hard-pressed criminals. When the usual fate befell the holy brothers, *temp.* Henry VIII, the idea of sanctuary seems to have lingered behind.

One or two noblemen's houses were built here, and noblemen and even bishops occupied them in the seventeenth century, but from the time of the dissolution of the monastery until the dawn of the eighteenth century the place became and remained the vilest and least approachable centre of vice and crime in the whole map of London. You may recall Macaulay's quoted reference to it (*see* page 20 *ante*).

Its ill-omened name of Alsatia was apparently taken from Alsace—of old, now, and doubtless tomorrow also—the cockpit of contending passions.

It boasted a theatre even in the sixteenth century,

SALISBURY SQUARE
& ST BRIDE'S SPIRE

established for a while in some buildings of the dispossessed monastery. It had many notable old inns and ale-houses, such as the "Bolt-in-Tun" and the "Black Lion," and these, like the "Hanging Sword," are immortalized in the lanes that bear their names, though the "Hanging Sword" was probably merely the sign of some tradesman's shop. Its alley was the home of Jerry Cruncher, of the *Tale of Two Cities*. For the rest, Alsatia was Oliver Goldsmith's Savile Row, for at the Sign of the Harrow in Water Lane (now Whitefriars Street) lived his tailor, Filby, who altruistically laboured for our beloved Noll and gave more than he gat.

Practically nothing from the past remains in this once hallowed, and once vile, area. But it is interesting to record that lately a fragment of the old Carmelite church and the floor of its chapter house were brought to light during demolitions between Bouverie and Whitefriars streets, and a small vaulted cellar still survives under Britten's Court.

Salisbury Square

Our next right-hand turn out of Fleet Street takes us into Salisbury Court, leading to Salisbury Square.

You must picture the development of "modern" Fleet Street in this wise: It ranks as the first suburban or extra-mural street which led beyond the walls of the old Roman city, and was developed by our own ancestors through the choice by great nobles of ground on each side of it on which to erect their inns or town houses.

Exactly in the same way, when the magnet of the Palace of Whitehall had drawn the town as far west as Charing Cross, Pall Mall was, in the seventeenth century, colonized by court favourites.

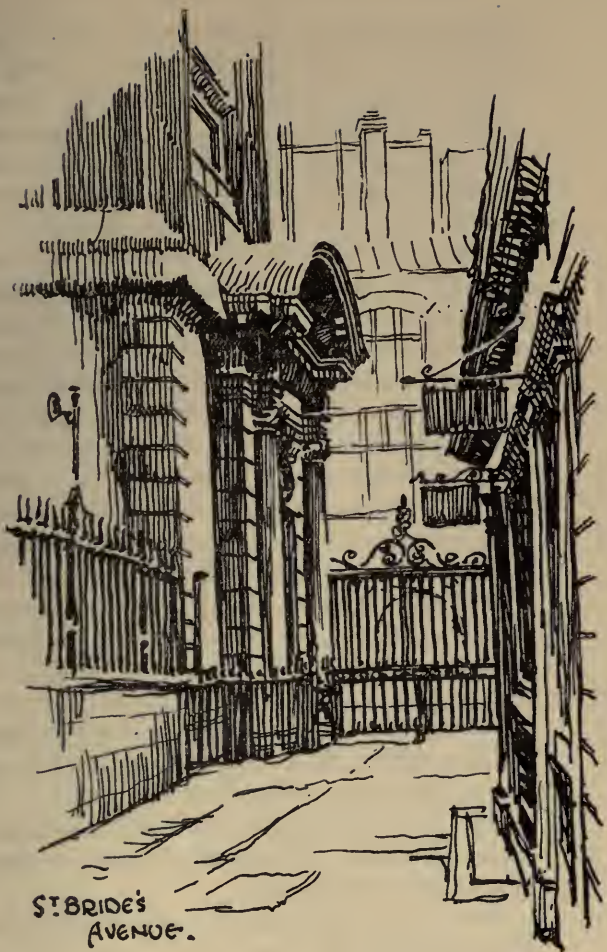
Salisbury Square derives its name from the great house and gardens of the Bishop of Salisbury, *circa* 1250.

It changed hands centuries later and came into possession of the Earls of Dorset, and was known as Dorset Square and Court for a time. But the older name has returned and only Dorset Street remains to connect the Sackvilles with this famous square. For it has glorious memories since the Great Fire, which, of course, destroyed it. Wren helped to rebuild here and erected for Davenant the Duke's Theatre where Betterton played. Here, too, sprang up the fashion of the mug-house, in which each patron kept his own sacred mug. The mugs were filled with heady liquors, and in the troubles of the '15 the mug-house riots, which history does not disdain to record, ended in the turning down of five empty mugs, whose owners, still greater mugs, were hanged in the square for breaking heads and crying "Ormond."

The last survivor of these London mug-houses was the "Barley Mow" (Ward's Irish House) in Salisbury Court.

The poet Dryden lived ten years in the square and Shadwell in the court.

The court's chief fame rests on the name of


ST. BRIDE'S
AVENUE.

Samuel Richardson, who came to Salisbury Court as early as 1720 and never left it till his death in 1761. The author of *Clarissa* served his apprenticeship as a printer here and, rising in his profession, set up in business and ultimately bought a block of houses in the court (north-west side) which he converted into large printing offices, warehouses, and a residence for himself. He moved in in 1755. His proof-reader in 1747 was Goldsmith, and you may fairly picture Richardson, at work on *Pamela* in 1740, being disturbed by Dr. Johnson or Hogarth; or Goldsmith in 1747 marking his place in the proof-sheets of *Clarissa* before joining the company of lions upstairs; or Johnson's black servant hurrying hither in 1756 for a loan of five guineas to save his master from the Sponging House. Richardson's last residence in the court was still standing in 1896.

And now for our last divagations on the journey out—St. Bride's Avenue and Lane, St. Bride's Church, and the site of Bridewell.

St. Bride's The avenue leads to the church and is not an old lane. No. 85 was for a time the publishing office of *Punch*. Here, abutting on the churchyard, was an old house which apparently survived the Great Fire, for John Milton lodged in it, though I know not when. It was still standing in 1920, when it was burnt down.

You must now look up at the spire of St. Bride's Church, which has been called "a madrigal in stone."

BRIDE LANE

It is Wren's work, a notable example of his post-Fire restoration. The spire melts into the blue deliciously, and it occurs to me that the modern city skyscraper architects have come here for their inspiration. Wren's church replaced a very much smaller one destroyed by the Fire; it was completed in 1703. The spire is lower than Wren made it by 8 feet. It has been twice badly damaged by lightning, and its stature was reduced in the work of repairing it.

The parish registers and books survived the Fire; they go back to 1587 and contain elaborate details of the disaster.

The dust of Wynkyn de Worde, the pioneer printer, and of Lovelace, the cavalier poet, lie in this soil, and Samuel Richardson is buried under the central aisle of the church. Here also one of Pepys's brothers was buried, but in the earlier edifice, where he and his family often worshipped as children. I rather think some of them were christened here.

And was not the famous Dr. Atterbury incumbent of St. Bride's when he was called to receive the confession of Lord Castlewood, which revealed the truth concerning Henry Esmond's birth? (Forgive me; to me Esmond is far more real than Wynkyn de Worde, or even Sam Richardson.)

Bridewell

South of St. Bride's, and running down to the Thames on the south and the Fleet on the east, there existed from Norman times a royal residence. We know that Henry VIII enlarged it and

ST. BRIDE'S
SPIRE.

sometimes lived in it. Shakespeare, who was careful to follow the historians of his period pretty accurately, lays scenes in his *Henry VIII* in Bridewell.

At Henry's death Bishop Ridley persuaded Edward VI, who apparently was considering the demolition of this palace, to hand it over as a workhouse for London's vagrant poor. It was a splendid gift, for the young king added a grant of land and furniture.

I fear that the place was not very well run. It soon got a name for vice and dirt and infamy. Some of the buildings fronting on the Fleet were converted into wharves for sea coal, and the residue was rather a house of correction than a refuge. Turn back to page 20 and recall my account of the daily whippings of male and female ne'er-do-wells in Restoration days. The Fire, which devoured so much, devoured nothing so little mourned.

But a new, if smaller, Bridewell grew from its ashes. If the new Bridewell was small by comparison, the old must have been vast indeed.

New Bridewell, designed still as a house of correction, was built on the northern half of the old site, and consisted of buildings built on all four sides of two great, connected squares, with a small garden towards the Thames. One side looked on the Fleet River, and the building was constantly damp and unhealthy. Every poet and writer of the eighteenth century who has chronicled City life

has referred to the squalor and punishments of Bridewell. But it is fair to say that Ridley's noble plans were not wholly set at naught. The house was ostensibly run on workhouse lines, and contained a poor hospital. Johnson's old friend and servant, the quack doctor Levett, was buried in Bridewell's burial-ground; he passed his latter days doctoring the poor in these parts and in the neighbouring Alsatia.

Bridewell Palace has vanished into thin air and left not a rack behind. Indeed, the Norman work survived longest. Portions of this were rediscovered in 1840. A whole block of new streets and alleys and noisy workshops cover the site of the palace which sheltered kings and beggars whom Death impartially beckons to oblivion.

One interesting point concerning Bridewell emerged curiously late in its history, and makes the site a place of pious pilgrimage to members of the Congregational Church all over the world.

Here, in 1567, were imprisoned the members of the Congregational Church first formed after Elizabeth's accession—two hundred men and women with their pastor, Mr. Fitz, whose name is associated with the origins of the Pilgrim Fathers. Here in the Bridewell these martyrs to their faith set out in writing their religious principles; these writings are still preserved in the public archives, and show indisputably that Bridewell was the *fons et origo* of post-Reformation Congregationalism.

ye olde
Cheshire
Cheese
Ye Olde Cheshire Cheese
Fleet Street.

CHAPTER VII

The Return Journey: Shoe Lane, Cheshire Cheese, Gough Square

The Return Journey

And now "half of our heavy task is done," and we stand at the east end of Fleet Street, where the roar of traffic drowns, if it could ever be heard, the gurgle of "that rapid stream," the Fleet, which runs through it down New Bridge Street to the Thames. I have already painted a Restoration picture of Fleet River and bridge and refer you back to page 21. You may read and note and then "look upon this picture and on that."

. . . . .

We turn our faces westward again and take the north side of Fleet Street. An alarming number of little alleys and courts make a maze of the block between Farringdon Street and Shoe Lane

Actually, however, though some of them are very old, they contain very little history. You can imagine the development of this quarter from being the gardens of those Inns set up *extra muros* by spiritual and temporal lords; thereafter, with the sea coal and other traffic up the Fleet, wharves and warehouses rose beside the stream; and, the water traffic dying, the place became a very unsavoury quarter of dirt, disease, and crime.

Shoe Lane

We need not diverge until we come to Shoe Lane, a very old and still important link connecting

Holborn with Fleet Street. Shoe Lane existed under the name of Showell (doubtless a still earlier resident) as long ago as the twelfth century. It had acquired its present name (variously spelt, of course) as early as 1310.

Its importance increased when towards the end of the same century the Bishop of Bangor erected his inn or palace here; it had a great timbered house and very large garden; the latter existed in Dr. Johnson's day and boasted a rookery; the house, or a very old house built by later Bishops of Bangor, was still in existence in 1826.

In the middle of Fleet Street, immediately opposite the opening of Shoe Lane, stood a famous city landmark, the Fleet Street conduit. It played a notable part in Tudor history, but was abolished long before the Great Fire. This conduit supplied water to the east end of Fleet Street, and was contained in a stone tower, adorned with figures of angels, which apparently assisted to strike out on bells old airs and hymn tunes every hour.

On State occasions the conduit tower was decorated and painted, and when Anne Boleyn passed to her coronation the conduit poured something stronger than water, to the great joy of Shoe Lane and the enhanced popularity of Queen Anne.

Pepys, "snatching a fearful joy," came to Shoe Lane to see cockfighting, and his diary-entry might well be made today in a Pall Mall club after a visit of curiosity to some new greyhound racing

THE ENTRANCE TO
THE CHESHIRE CHEESE

place. It runs : " To Shoe Lane to see a cocke-fighting at a new pit there, a spot I was never at in my life : but Lord ! to see the strange variety of people, from Parliament man . . . to the poorest 'prentices, bakers, brewers, butchers, draymen and what not, and all these fellows one with another cursing and betting. I soon had enough of it."

Shoe Lane, or one or other of its little courts, is associated with several men of letters. Poor young Chatterton was buried hard by in St. Andrew's workhouse ; Richard Lovelace, the handsome cavalier poet, died of starvation in Gunpowder Alley; and in St. Andrew's Church Benjamin Disraeli, when a small boy, was baptized.

Turn back to page 3 to refresh your memory concerning the Roman remains discovered last year (1927) in the foundations of the *Daily Express* buildings.

Wine Office Court

Our next turn out of Fleet Street (if you have not reached it through the maze of Shoe Lane) is Wine Office Court, a place of pilgrimage never omitted by good Americans for the fame of the " Cheshire Cheese." And the fame of the " Cheshire Cheese " is a curious example of the elusiveness of fame. For Old Timbs calls it " an old chop house, long noted for punch," and then drops it like a dead frog.

America has made it famous for us and we shall of course walk in. Before we do so let us fix the site of Goldsmith's lodging at No. 6. Here Johnson paid his first call on Goldsmith when

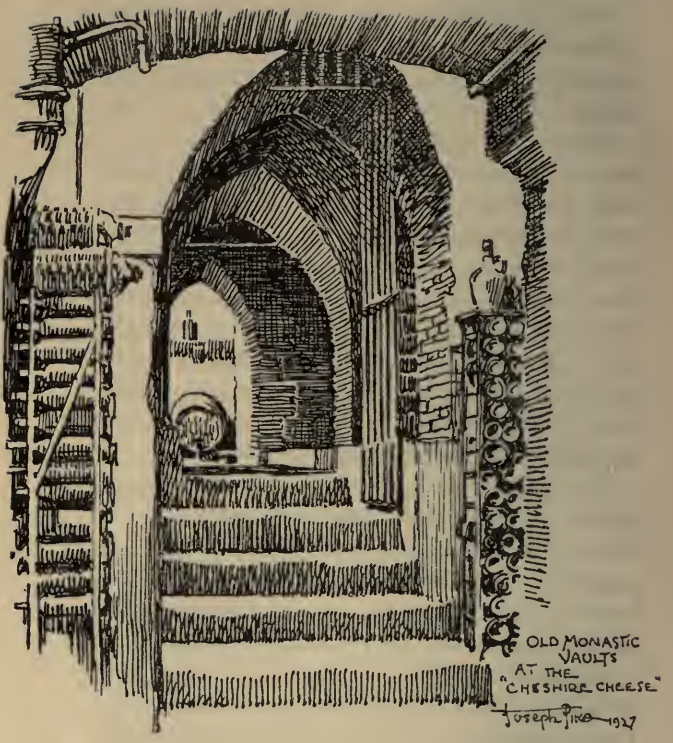
the latter was on the staff of the *Ledger*, and here was written the first part of *The Vicar of Wakefield*. The house was taken down in 1830.

Before we enter the "Cheshire Cheese" turn back to p. 18 and read again my remarks concerning the importance of tavern life in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

When Timbs wrote his books on Old London people cared very much less for relics of the past. There was not then one small part of the interest which today attaches to old walls that have echoed to the voices of famous men long dead. In the middle of the nineteenth century we were quite certain that any building in the land would benefit by restoration or substitution in the new Victorian Gothic style. Today, at any rate, we destroy blushingly and rebuild nervously.

The Cheshire Cheese

The present fame of the "Cheese" rests on the fact that it, alone of all Fleet Street taverns, in some measure preserves the atmosphere of the time of the Great Cham of Fleet Street, Dr. Johnson. Its history, of course (on this very site), goes back far earlier; back to Ben Jonson and his boon companions who rhymed and revelled and drank deep here. Within the present walls you may picture the sardonic Charles ogling Nell Gwynne, for there is a record of such a visit. In their times and seasons hither forgathered Pope and Congreve (masters of the ornate and the satiric), splendid Mr. Addison and kindly, drunken Dicky Steele, Johnson, Burke, Boswell, and


OLD MONASTIC
VAULTS
AT THE
"CHESHIRE CHEESE"
Joseph Pennell 1927

the other lions, Tom Hood, Dickens, Thackeray, Tennyson.

The "Cheshire Cheese" was put in hand immediately after the Great Fire, for it was built and refurnished almost exactly as we see it today, down to the very pattern in crockery, in 1667.

And, since antiquity began to be valued for itself, very great pains have been taken to preserve, not only its old-world atmosphere, but its records, relics, and history.

More than this, it can boast a most interesting continuity of existence from the fact that from the time of Johnson there have been among its patrons men sufficiently interested in the past to collect and hand down from generation to generation first-hand information concerning past worthies and their habits.

Johnson, for example, was at pains to interrogate old Cibber (who had known Dryden), and thereby he fixed for us for all time Dryden's habits and customs at Will's. And other inquiring minds have done the same service in the case of Johnson and his cronies at the "Cheese."

We know where Johnson sat, and on which side of him Goldsmith sat, and we know that when Johnson spoke Goldsmith had the wit to be silent.

Johnson only used the "Cheese" regularly while he lived in Gough Square; as naturally, Goldsmith, who lived next door to the tavern, used it also. Your visit to Gough Square will prove to you the necessity for "eating out." It

was out of the question that dinners could regularly be cooked and served in No. 17.

So the "Cheese" met the needs of the doctor and his friends. You may inspect the punch bowls from which they drank, listen to the clock on the stairs which ticked out their little day, venerate the chair in which Johnson sat at the "Mitre," sit in the seats of the mighty, stand in the bar which is the very moral of what an ancient bar should be and this bar has always been.

Indeed, here and in No. 17 Gough Square, and nowhere else in London, you can see things through Doctor Johnson's eyes and live his life over again.

The "Cheese" is a museum worth preserving. You should go all over it, upstairs and downstairs.

Johnson's Chief Lodgings

And now we plunge into the very heart of Johnson memories: Bolt Court, Gough Square, and Johnson's Court. Johnson resided in all three in this sequence:

No. 17 Gough Square, 1748-1759.

No. 7 Johnson's Court, 1765-1776.

No. 8 Bolt Court, 1776 to his death in 1784.

The years between 1759 and 1765 were spent in Staple Inn, Gray's Inn, and No. 1 Inner Temple Lane.

Bolt Court

When Johnson, in 1776, found a decent house in No. 8 Bolt Court, which he secured at a rental of £40 per annum, it was a reasonably fashionable residential court of good-sized houses. His own house had three storeys and a basement, and was

built of good red brick, not at all unlike the still existing house in Gough Square.

Here, as at the end of his tenancy of No. 17 Gough Square after Mrs. Johnson's death, he housed his curiously assorted and quarrelsome "circus," of which I shall speak to you. And here, on December 13, 1784, Death, whom he had always feared as a bogey, came for him and shattered one more illusion in his life. For he found Death kind and friendly, and not terrible at all, and he went out with him as cheerfully as ever he went out with Reynolds or Langton or Beauclerk.

Johnson had a small garden behind his house which he loved to water. It became for a time, after 1858, the playground of the Stationers' Company School. It was in Johnson and Bolt courts that Boswell shadowed his great victim. He never came to Gough Square, but he gives us a delightful picture of the old man arranging his books, in a cloud of dust and a pair of hedger's gloves, in the newly acquired panelled library with its stout, old-fashioned mahogany tables and chairs, in Bolt Court.

But I myself cannot long linger in Bolt Court. I cannot recapture the past where no vestige remains of the original bricks and mortar which alone can house ghosts from the past. Let us go to Gough Square, still a fashionable residential area for the ghosts of substantial citizens.

Dr. Johnson's House Gough Square

My visit to Dr. Johnson's house in Gough Square was made under ideal conditions, and is marked with a white chalk in my memory. It so happened that everything made for successful impressionizing, and for a brief half hour I found myself living with Dr. Johnson in the flesh, sunning myself in his geniality, nobility, and humanity.

This house is the private property of Mr. Cecil Harmsworth, and it is through his generosity and energy that it stands today in the guise it wore when Johnson lived in it from 1748 to 1759, and contains the nucleus of a very interesting and valuable Johnson museum, which the lady who will act as your cicerone can describe to you in detail as one reading from a standard work on Johnson. There are pictures, prints, books, and autographs, and among them Johnson's letter to Goldsmith proposing Boswell for the Club.

This is a Queen Anne house, and is the only lodging occupied by Johnson which remains standing today. He acquired it at a time when he had received an advance of royalty for the great *Dictionary*, and his choice fell on it chiefly for the garret that runs the length of the house, and is reached by a staircase of Jacobean style. The house is compact; it is of its period; is four-storeyed, containing on each of the three lower floors two rooms of fairly uniform size on each side of the staircase and landings. The top storey is the long room in which the *Dictionary* was principally compiled.

For the first four years of his occupation you may picture Dr. and Mrs. Johnson living here together, he working harder than he ever worked again, dividing his time between the *Rambler* and the *Dictionary*. Mrs. Johnson—ailing, exacting, and house-proud—never in her life would enter the garret, which, I doubt not, was in a state of chaos which would have driven her mad. Hither, every morning, the doctor climbed ponderously to join his six copyists (of whom five were Scots), who sat against a bench which ran the whole length of the eastern wall, looking out on the Old Bailey and St. Paul's. These young gentlemen did a full week's work at 23s. a week. I walked with the shade of Johnson to the window on the right (as he must often have done to check the work of his clerk) and glanced out at the prospect, and was at once struck by the magnificent view of the Cathedral which in those days must have existed.

His own seat was to the right of the staircase by the little south window and before the fireplace. Here he sat day after day on a chair with a broken leg, and here one day he explained to Sir Joshua's sister his curious reason for preferring that crippled piece of furniture. Ask your cicerone to tell you in her own words. In 1752 Mrs. Johnson died, and shortly afterwards Johnson's "circus" filled the house. This was surely the most curious company every got together under one roof to plague the master of the house.

Miss Anna Williams, blind daughter of a Welsh physician, whom Johnson took into his house out of pure charity, occupied the first-floor room to the right of the staircase as you ascend, and rewarded her host by "hating everybody" and stirring up trouble at all times. To the left was the drawing-room.

Above Miss Williams's was Johnson's bedroom, shared with Mrs. J. while she lived. Above the drawing-room slept Robert Levett, another dependant, ex-waiter and quack doctor, who waited at breakfast each day and thereafter doctored the neighbouring poor. He shared the bedroom with the black Jamaican slave, Francis Barber, who remained Johnson's body-servant till the end. On the ground floor was the breakfast-room and, presumably, a hall or domestic offices. The basement is of the coal-hole type.

There is a wealth of information available to enable you to reconstruct the daily life at No. 17. Never before, I think, have I got more completely into the past. The house echoes still to the talk of Reynolds, Goldsmith, Burke, Burney, and the rest. I could almost see Dr. Burney taking his cup of tea, greeting and making polite conversation to Miss Williams in her dingy shawl, and, later, puffing up the stairs behind the kindly doctor to thumb Greek folios in the cold garret. I could almost see the apologetic bailiff arresting in that garret the overworked and harassed man for a debt of £5 odd, and Barber hurrying out with an

S O S to Samuel Richardson hard by, and later returning triumphantly from the Sponging House, to the delight of the household, with the serene scholar who, confident of salvation, had been standing drinks to the bailiff on his expectations. I could almost see—nay, I saw with my own eyes—the dear and dirty, splendid, squalid, fine and filthy eighteenth century, when literature throve greatly on an empty belly and genius lived from hand to mouth.

Johnson's Court

Of Johnson's Court, through which you may return to Fleet Street, I need not say very much more.

Johnson's house here was also of respectable size and appearance, and accommodated his menagerie. It was from here that he published his *Shakespeare* and issued a new edition of the *Dictionary*. And Boswell, walking down the court with Beauclerk, said : " I have a veneration for this court." Beauclerk said ditto.

Red Lion Court

At Red Lion Court we next branch off and walk through it without pausing till we reach Great New Street. Various streets named Harding lead off Great New Street and mark what was in 1500 the estate of the widow Hardinge, bequeathed by her to the Goldsmiths Company.

And here is a little point worth noting : Dr. Johnson and Goldsmith were two famous worthies in these parts; yet Johnson's Court and one or two courts and alleys in the heart of their Fleet Street were named respectively " Johnson's " and " Goldsmith's " a long time before their birth—prophetically, no doubt.

CHAPTER VIII

Nevill's Court, Moravian Chapel, Fetter Lane, Record Office, St. Dunstan's

Nevill's Court

Pursue your way down Great New Street until, on your left, opposite Messrs. Eyre and Spottiswoode's (who cover much ground in these parts), you observe a narrow lane called Nevill's Court. This you must enter, your hand on your dagger and your heart in your mouth.

Nevill's Court is, in my view, the least advertised and best hidden nook in all London. Even the Great Fire of 1666 failed to discover it. There are in it walls as ancient as the sixteenth century. The name of the court is derived from Ralph Neville, Bishop of Chichester in 1222, who owned land here—an inn, I suppose.

Look over the wall at the old houses on your left. Parts of one or two of them survive the Great Fire ; you will note how gloriously restoration-like they overhang in the top storeys. And if you watch you will find something very romantic in the faces that peer out at you from those mysterious windows.

No. 10 was known in the old days as " the Great House in Nevill's Alley," and was probably built just after the Great Fire. It was bought by the Moravians (whose chapel we are just coming to) in 1774, and used as a meeting-house, and

NEVILLS COURT
FETTER LANE

Richard Baxter preached in it. So, later on, did Wesley and Whitefield. In the gardens, I think, the bones of many children lie, whose names are recorded in the chapel.

Feel your way slowly past this house until, opposite the tiny greengrocer's shanty, you see a dingy door marked "Moravian Chapel." Push inside, fearing no man, and you will find yourself in the dingiest and best hidden court in all London. The bare building opposite you is the Moravian Chapel (which you must enter from Fetter Lane) and some of the buildings of this court date back to Heaven knows when.

Leave this court and pass on into Fetter Lane, and enter No. 32 if you are interested in a very curious piece of real old England, real old human nature.

The Moravian Chapel

The general secretary of the Moravian Missions on the first floor will courteously show you round.

This very chapel (which, by the way, is so well concealed that Mr. Beresford Chancellor could not find it and believed it non-existent) was built in Queen Elizabeth's reign for Presbyterian worship, and Praize-God Barebone (uncle of "Damned" Barebone, the rich and erratic architect and builder, of Crane Court) thundered and preached here.

You would not think so, to glance at its severe and unromantic interior, and, of course, even the structure has been much restored and altered, yet it has a continuous history as a place of worship,

for in 1662 the Nonconformist martyrs of the Act of Uniformity took over the chapel and worshipped here in their own manner and nobly, indeed, did their first minister, John Turner, work among the poor during the Great Plague.

After the Nonconformists came the Independents, formed by Goodwin, the expelled President of Magdalen College, Oxford, and this body remained continuously until 1732. During their reign the chapel was half gutted by fire in the Sacheverell Riots. Baptists used it for a few years until 1740, when the Moravians first leased it.

Of the Moravians I need not say much. They are sprung from the disciples of Johann Huss of the fifteenth century. They were often persecuted and expelled from place to place in Austria, and were settled in England in 1738 by Count Zinzendorf. They are famous for their mission work, well known in America, and own perhaps two-score chapels in this country. This chapel was their first meeting-house in England and, as I have shown you, is not only the oldest meeting-house now standing in all England, but can show continuous usage, and stands, I think, as a very remarkable monument to men's loyalty to their religious beliefs and unswerving courage and persistence in the face of persecution, ridicule or indifference.

Fetter Lane

You emerge again into Fetter Lane, a narrow but busy street which connects Holborn with Fleet Street. You must not despise it, for it has an illustrious history, and was once one of the most

GREYSTOKE PLACE-
FETTER LANE.

important streets in Old London—perhaps for the reason that it was a famous pawnbroking quarter in Jacobean days.

Some say the name is derived from FEWTER or idler, others from FRATER, the brother of some religious order, others favour the French VAUTRIER, a greyhound slipper. You may choose for yourself, for none can now correct you.

Nobles and blackguards and poets have lived here. Tradition places Dryden's lodging here opposite to Otway. Lord Strafford may have lived here; he is a Fleet Street worthy. Praize-God Barebone lived here, and so did his nephew, our old friend "Damned" Barebone, the erratic and wealthy contractor.

Gulliver was given property in Fetter Lane. We know from Lord Eldon that there were notable traffic blocks at the junction of Fetter Lane and Fleet Street, for he and his learned brother were "overset in their sedan chairs" in a crush there. To Fetter Lane Charles Lamb "crept unwillingly to school."

Turning left from the Moravian Chapel you soon find yourself beside the Record Office. Half-past two is a good time to reach this Paradise of autograph hunters.

The Rolls Chapel

The Record Office was begun in 1856 and not entirely completed until 1896. The most diehard *laudator temporis acti* cannot withhold from the buildings a word of praise for their dignity, utility, and, indeed, beauty. No one should fail to pay

THE RECORD OFFICE
CHANCERY LANE
Joseph Pike 1927

a visit to the museum. This room replaces a building known as the Chapel of the House of Converts, and later as the Chapel of the Rolls. The house was founded by Henry III in 1232 for the reception of converted Jews, and the chapel was contemporary. Edward I expelled the Jews, and the post of keeper, becoming a sinecure, was usually bestowed on a clerk in Chancery whose duty it was to keep the records of that department. Here they were preserved exclusively till the days of Queen Victoria, at which time all national public records began to be concentrated there.

It will be seen, therefore, that the chapel itself was the repository of these priceless records for five centuries, even while it was used for worship. It suffered many material alterations, and was partially destroyed by fire. If its destruction and replacement by the present museum building is criticized, let it be remembered that the chapel was a ruin, and that the chief glories among its monuments are preserved in their places in the present building. These include the monument to Dr. Young, Master of the Rolls under Henry VIII, a splendid example of Torrigiano's work.

The Records

To me the thrill and interest of the Record Office museum is unique. Others must at times have felt, as I have, the difficulties of accepting history as fact. How often, as I read English history, have I felt those human touches concerning the kings and great captains of the Middle Ages to be but the art of the writer, the technique of the

novelist. But here history proves itself; here the past unwinds itself in a pageant of a thousand years, with real flesh-and-blood actors; here at last you learn that history is not less true because it is romantic and that it is true because it is human.

You may read the records of your own parish in the very *Domesday Book* which was brought completed to William Conqueror just before his death. You may examine Chaucer's signature and peruse, as Henry VIII perused, Wolsey's last pathetic snivvles. You may justify Froude by reading Queen Elizabeth's instructions for the delivery of a dozen condemned criminals to make up Martin Frobisher's crews in an expedition for treasure.

You may spell through the last letters of Essex and Leicester to their queen, endorsed in Elizabeth's own hand. You may read Drake's hasty scrawl praying for " Monycyon and Vittual " and reporting progress of the Armada battle; and Robert Cecil's to his father reporting that his own eyes had seen the battle from Dover cliffs and at night the fireships blazing in Calais Roads.

You may read the anonymous letter to Lord Monteagle, revealing the Gunpowder Plot, and the confession of poor Fawkes and his signatures before and after torture. You may observe Milton's business style, read Monmouth's terror-stricken whines for mercy, and the very dispatches, red-hot from the battle, that recorded the victories of Blenheim, Trafalgar and Waterloo.

A very "topical" letter is Defoe's to Lord Nottingham, praying to be spared the pillory. But, as you remember, his plea was unavailing, for he suffered at Temple Bar in 1703.

Americans will be specially interested in the famous "Olive Branch" petition which might have averted the War of Independence, and a letter from George Washington to "his great and good friend, King George III." But perhaps I see these things through spectacles too rose-coloured and do but doom you to disappointment. I confess myself an incurable romantic, and prefer the dust of ages to the polish of the twentieth century.

Crane Court

Leaving the Record Office again by the Fetter Lane entrance, you return to Fleet Street and for the first time take a step backwards to look into dingy little Crane Court, for the sake of "Damned" Barebone, its distinguished resident. He had a good-sized house here, with steps leading up to it at the end of the cul-de-sac, and this house survived until 1877, when it was burned down. It was a Wren house, and became for a long time the headquarters of the Royal Society until 1781.

In Crane Court was established in 1745 one of the first circulating libraries.

And now resume the walk westward again and pause before St. Dunstan's Church.

St. Dunstan's

The present structure is modern, less than a hundred years old, yet the tower with its open lantern is admirable, and can stand not unworthily

ST DUNSTAN'S
TOWER

beside St. Bride's. It was built on the site of a fifteenth-century church, and escaped the Great Fire by a matter of feet—the width of three houses. The older building jutted out into the roadway, and its tower was adorned with a famous Fleet Street landmark, the "Giants of St. Dunstan's" clock. The life-sized figures struck bells at the hours. The clock, I believe, may still be seen at St. Dunstan's in Regent's Park. Lamb burst into tears at its removal from Fleet Street. And because the name of St. Dunstan's is now a household word in connection with the blind, I will retell the story of its removal. Among the crowds who used to block Fleet Street at the hours when the "figures worked" was, as a boy, the Lord Hertford of the "Wallace Collection." When the church was pulled down he bought it for old sake's sake for 200 guineas, and set it up in his villa in Regent's Park, which he thereupon named *St. Dunstan's*. The house, now relinquished as a centre for the blind, is owned by Mr. Otto Kahn, who preserves the clock. That is how Izaak Walton's old parish church gave its name to a post-war institution.

But here is what my friend, Mr. W. S. Barclay, says of the church of which he is doubtless a living ornament, since he lives in Clifford's Inn :

> "Here preached the great Tyndale, maker of the first English Bible; here Pepys attended, a curious listener; here Izaak Walton, the Compleat Angler, served as a sidesman. Such

records and monuments, jealously preserved, are common to most City churches, the more since the bulk of their treasures were consumed in the Great Fire. It is rare, therefore, to come across a public statue of high merit, long pre-dating the Fire, and treated as a waif which none has the right or the will to own and tend. Yet such is the statue of Queen Elizabeth that stands over the vestry side door of St. Dunstan's.

. . . .

"In its time it has looked down on probably more than 350 Lord Mayors' processions. It stood on the old Lud Gate, perhaps to recall the visit of the great Tudor Queen to the City when she opened its first Royal Exchange. Then in 1666 came the Great Fire and evil days, but over a rebuilt Ludgate once more she presided till 1760, when, the street being widened and the gate abolished, the City presented the statue to the Alderman of the Ward of Farringdon Without. He in turn bestowed it into the custody, but not as the property, of St. Dunstan's Church, which then jutted out 30 ft. into the street. Here she remained looking down the street to the dome of St. Paul's till in 1834 the old St. Dunstan's fabric was pulled down by special Act of Parliament and the present edifice rebuilt. So she now stands facing

across Fleet Street, and under her the children troop to the parochial school

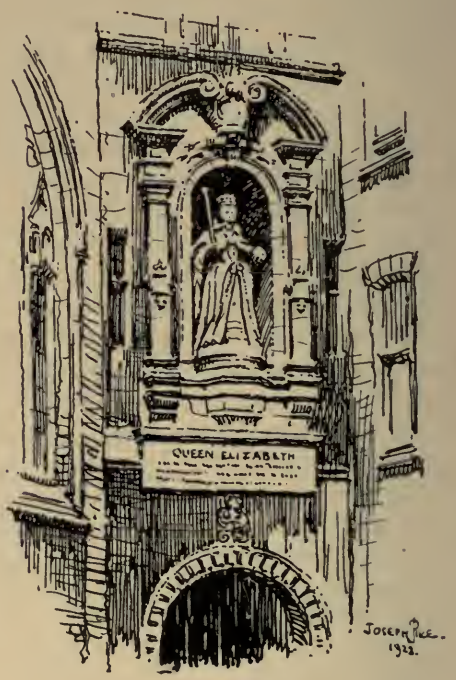
. . . .

"She stands, but not unscathed. The rain drips through her canopy upon the Royal orb and on her sumptuous robes of soft Portland stone. The soot and murk of ninety-three years shroud her in their mantle, till the imperious features of King Hal's daughter are like to those of a very blackamoor. Already signs of decay have come. The pedestal on which the statue stood was found crumbling. Lest the children be hurt and the statue fall, the church repaired the pedestal. Now the rector would have your statue—it is not the church's statue—looked to before worse befall. But it seems that the great City Corporation will not move unless they may take over wholly their former gift; the Ward of Farringdon Without has no moneys which may be allocated to the restoration of statues; and the only concrete suggestion is that St. Dunstan's, which has given sanctuary to the waif and stray, should pass round the hat on its behalf to the charitably inclined. Unfortunately, the parish is very poor; it contains but 700 souls, and the wants of the school-children are greater even than the wants of Queen Bess."

. . . .

It may be that some of you who read my

book and these moving words may feel disposed to repair and clean and protect Queen Elizabeth and leave behind you a name revered in St. Dunstan's and Fleet Street. Some of you will surely be generously disposed when the ghost of Izaak Walton hands you the bag.



CLIFFORDS INN &
ST DUNSTANS - FLEET STREET

CHAPTER IX

Clifford's Inn and Chancery Lane

Clifford's Inn

Westward a few yards, the very inviting gateway to Clifford's Inn seduces you again from Fleet Street. You enter this ancient Inn of Chancery—long since defunct as such—through an early seventeenth-century gate-house bearing the arms of the Cliffords, to wit: Checky, or and azure, a fesse and bordure gules, bezante (if that helps you at all).

Edward the Second granted the property to Robert Clifford, and Robert's widow let it to students of the law. The family of Clifford continued to own the Inn until 1618, when the Legal Society, for so long their lessees, bought the property, leaving to the Cliffords a small piece of the land, a right to the use of a set of chambers, and a rent charge of £4 per annum, which was not redeemed until 1880.

Thus, as in the case of the Temple, the students never relaxed their grip of the Inn, but quite early in the sixteenth century Clifford's Inn became affiliated to the Inner Temple and students entered there as a stepping-stone to the rival establishment on the south side of Fleet Street. This accounts for Edward Coke's admission to Clifford's Inn in 1571 and Selden's in 1602.

ENTRANCE TO CLIFFORDS INN.

Very severe, indeed, were the rules which governed the students' behaviour, as, indeed, one would expect. Fines ranged from a farthing per swearword to 6s. 8d. for blood-letting. You must go carefully round Clifford's Inn and peer into every corner. It will reward you. Some of these rather dingy little buildings are really very old. A cluster round the gateway, Nos. 12-15, for example, are seventeenth century. Some of the chambers here and elsewhere are extraordinarily picturesque, panelled, wainscoted, and honeycombed with secret doors and unexpected passages and cupboards. Indeed, Clifford's Inn reveals the largest fragment of seventeenth-century London in our area. The hall is Gothic and plain, yet it dates from 1780 and in part much earlier. Timbs relates an extraordinary, and unexplained, custom which obtained in Hall.

In his day the Society consisted of two distinct bodies: "the Principal and Rules, and the Juniors or 'Kentish Mess,'" each having its own table. At the end of dinner the chairman of the Kentish Mess bows to the Principal, takes from a servant four rolls of bread, and, without speaking, throws them several times on the table and then hurls them t'other end of the table, whence the servant removes them. This is the Clifford's Inn substitute for grace. Someone in *Notes and Queries* has suggested that this custom is a survival of the ancients' sacrifice to Ceres—a query rather than a note, I fancy.

It was in the old hall that the judges sat to settle disputes arising out of the Great Fire, and you can imagine the multiplicity, intricacy, and poignancy of such problems.

Other names connected with Clifford's Inn include the regicide Harrison, who was an attorney's clerk before laying his hands on the Lord's anointed; Dyer, Lamb's old crony who married his laundress and survived till 1841, the lady living on in Clifford's Inn and extreme filth as late as 1861. Lastly, Samuel Butler lived for many years in No. 15, and wrote here his great classic, *The Way of All Flesh*, on the whole the most cynical work that ever achieved immortality. (No man just about to be married should read Chapter XIII. But this is a diversion.) Clifford's Inn has now no connection with the law, and its days are numbered. We must not complain. You can either keep your capital as a museum, or live in it. Our generation tries very hard and very earnestly to do both, which is more than our fathers can claim.

And Clifford's Inn has fallen into good hands. It has had a number of noble benefactors and preservers, among them the Society of Knights Bachelor. It was bought in 1903 by Mr. Willett, of Daylight Saving fame, from the last representatives of the legal interests. Recently a portion of the Inn nearest the Record Office was bought by the Government for future enlargements. This portion includes Nos. 16 and 17, and a portion

ST. FRIDES INN
FLEET STREET

of the garden. The rest of the Inn is now the property of Messrs. Eyre and Spottiswoode.

I have dealt unduly long with Clifford's Inn, yet cannot close without recording a little romance that belongs to No. 17.

A Romance of Secret Cupboards

In that building lives Mr. W. S. Barclay, already mentioned. In 1923 he was making some slight alterations in his charming rabbit-warren of panelled rooms when, hidden away at the back of an old cupboard, he came upon some papers, mildewed and mouse-nibbled, and covered with faded ink. Exactly thus were the famous *Thurloe Papers* discovered in Lincoln's Inn Gate House Chambers three hundred yards away (of which anon).

Mr. Barclay noted the seventeenth-century characters and took his find to an expert. They were papers in a lawsuit, and this was the story they revealed :

Sir Ralph Knight, of Nottingham, had a promising son, John. He had also a friend, a man of substance who dwelt in the Strand, in the Parish of Savoy. Mr. Clerkeson was his name, and he had a young daughter, Mary. The two friends (what more natural ?) betrothed their children in infancy; and, as consideration for his daughter's happiness, Clerkeson gives Knight £3,500 on the day of the marriage, and £1,500 more in due instalments. The Knights on their side convey lands in Yorkshire to trustees on trusts of the marriage.

CLIFFORD'S INN.
Joseph Pike 1928

The funds thus settled are to be held in trust for the issue of the marriage for ten generations.

Well, then, the marriage took place and Miss Mary became Mrs. Knight, and soon after is left a widow with one daughter, Hannah. Mary so far forgets herself as to marry again and beneath her—to wit, her husband's groom, James Watkinson. The Knight family, with their eye on John's daughter, Hannah, the beneficiary under the trust, immediately think the worst. Groom Watkinson is, of course, a blackguard and will sell the heiress to a fortune hunter or otherwise infringe the Knight interests.

So they decide to petition the Lord Keeper, Sir John Somers, to have the child made a Ward in Chancery.

The first necessity is, of course, to consult a lawyer, and the Knights find their way to Clifford's Inn and to No. 17, having been recommended to Messrs. Vernon and Keck, astute Chancery lawyers at that address. Excellently clear counsel's opinions by these two gentlemen tell the story to this point. They are dated 1693.

For 230 years these old papers have remained where Vernon or Keck, or their executors or successors, long ago overlooked them. How did the story end? My friend was sufficiently interested to try and discover. He wisely had search made among the Records of Chancery at the Rolls Chapel, viz. the Record Office. The

fifth file which the searcher examined gave the story in its entirety ! ! ! The request for the wardship of Hannah is preferred by counsel in the Chancellor's Court. The Court calls for and examines (and appears favourably impressed with) the replies put in to the complaints of the Knights by the defendants, Watkinson and wife.

Mrs. Watkinson greatly impresses the Court in her denial "that she has forfeited the right of guardianship, having married an honest man; she might have married a man of her station who would have been unkind to her child and spent her fortune." The Solomon of the Woolsack hereupon orders all parties, including the child, to come before him and appoints a day.

And here Mrs. Watkinson makes a false move and loses all that she had gained. On the day appointed, little Hannah and her nurse, Mrs. Peasmore, are nowhere to be found. With Mrs. Watkinson's connivance (through dread of losing her child) nurse and little girl have been sent to a safe place. His lordship is furiously angry. He awards the custody of the child to the Knights and sends a bailiff of the Court to find and take into custody the nurse, Mrs. Peasmore. Next week, Mrs. Peasmore is brought before the Court, is found guilty of contempt, and is committed to the Fleet until she pays the costs of her apprehension by the bailiff.

There is the tale complete. It is just an every-day story of human life, and I have wasted time

in telling it. I think you will agree that it is not inept at this juncture. It is an example of the romance that invests old papers and discoveries of antiquities; but, more than that, it shows the supreme value that lies in the careful preservation of records. Without them we should soon cease to regard the bygone centuries as predecessors of our own age, and our ancestors as men of like passions with ourselves. We should read history as one views a foreign puppet-show, and certainly imagine that justice and all qualities which separate us from savages, are inventions of our own day.

. . . .

Chancery Lane

And so we return to Fleet Street and the last stage of our pilgrimage. Chancery Lane, that busy street of lawyers and their stock-in-trade, was important in the reign of Edward I, when it was known as the New Street, and its present name of Chancery Lane (first Chancellor's Lane) is bound up in the history of the Rolls Chapel.

For when, as we have seen, the House of Converts gradually became the appanage of the Master of the Rolls and the storehouse of Chancery records, the street changed its name in conformity.

At the dawn of the seventeenth century it was, of course, "on the edge of the town"; to the west was open country on either side of the property of Lincoln's Inn. But fifty years later its

character was completely changed, for it was hemmed in with houses and one of the busiest of streets.

The great Bank of England building (No. 193), on the west side of Chancery Lane (Fleet Street end), replaces one or two old timbered houses (richly decorated) which survived till near the end of the eighteenth century. In one of these, without doubt, Izaak Walton pursued his trade of "linen draper bold" between 1625 and 1635. As we know, he was faithful to Fleet Street, for he lived in other lodgings in Chancery Lane, was sidesman of St. Dunstan's, and found a publisher for *The Compleat Angler* in Marriot of St. Dunstan's Churchyard, and for the best fishing tackle he patronized and recommended Kerby of Shoe Lane. Other Chancery Lane celebrities include Lord Strafford who was born there in 1593 and Abraham Cowley (1618). Ben Jonson is alleged to have worked on the brickwork of Lincoln's Inn wall, Wolsey is claimed as a Chancery Lane worthy, and the Norths, from whose records I have quoted once or twice, lived, and took particular interest, in the Lane. Half-way up, on the west side, you are arrested by a genuine antique. It is the great gate-house of Lincoln's Inn (like more than one to be found at Cambridge).

Lincoln's Inn

It was built by Sir T. Lovell in 1518, and the stone bears witness if I lie. It is, alas, the only portion of Lincoln's Inn which by any stretch of

GATEWAY TO
LINCOLN'S INN
FROM CHANCERY LANE

Joseph Pennell 1918

the imagination we can claim to be inside our area, but let us by all means claim it, for it holds very interesting and dramatic memories of the Protectorate! You will find on the wall of some chambers which adjoin the gate-house on the south side an identification plaque; these were the chambers once occupied by Cromwell's secretary, Thurloe. In the reign of William III a Mr. Tomlinson owned these chambers, and lent them to a clergyman in the long vacation. The clergyman (recall my story of Clifford's Inn) was of the type which looks a gift-horse in the mouth. For he spent his time nosing in the garret and found a false ceiling, and behind it lay the famous *Thurloe State Papers*, making up sixty-seven folio volumes. And the clergyman kept his find and sold it, and the *Thurloe Papers* were published and made history and have become a household word. And behind the same plaque, it is said, Cromwell once meditated murder—the putting away of a lawyer's clerk who had overheard his vile designs against the children of Charles I. Thurloe dissuaded him, but Cromwell was in the right of it, for the clerk (later Sir Samuel Morland) split and ruined the pretty plot.

Since it is outside my brief, I will tell the history of Lincoln's Inn in very few words.

It became an Inn of Court very much like the other Inns we have visited. It stands on the site of the Palace of the Bishop of Chichester, Ralph

Neville, Henry III's Chancellor. Part of its area was formerly in the monastery of Black Friars in Holborn, granted in 1300 or thereabouts to the Earl of Lincoln, who built here his "Inn," or London house.

Soon after his death the law students (as in the Temple) secured a lease, and have remained in occupation ever since. Indeed, the whole history of Fleet Street is a living memorial of the persistence and tenacity of lawyers.

The Earl of Lincoln's great garden was famous for its roses, its fruit and vegetables, and fish-pond. Ben Jonson, who had a hand in building the structure you see, praised its elm walks in song.

Its hall is famous and dates from the early sixteenth century. Masques and revels were performed in it from Tudor times, and kings and princes were entertained in it in Restoration days. Sir Thomas More's father and grandfather served as butlers in the hall.

Lincoln's Inn was famous also for its rabbits. It possessed a warren called the Coneygarth, which lay to the west of the gardens. The latter were enlarged in Pepys's time, and, of course, Pepys came to inspect progress; but the gardens again suffered curtailment when the library was built.

The open spaces on the western end of the Inn were, "until quite the other day," notorious, and even infamous, as the haunt, sanctuary and

pleasure-ground of scores of criminals and beggars. Here were duelling grounds, pillories, shows and unofficial markets which drew and held all the blackguards and beggars who felt themselves comparatively safe outside the sanctuary of Alsatia.

But we must leave Lincoln's Inn and Chancery Lane and, indeed, Fleet Street. For our play is done and it's time to go home.

It is here that Ned Ward, "the London Spy," ends his pilgrimage outside his own favourite tavern, the "King's Head," in Chancery Lane. The illustrious Dryden having died of an ingrowing toenail, the funeral cortège passed down Chancery Lane and caused a disgraceful riot which brought out Ned with his pen and foaming beaker. It seems that the coachmen who drove the noble mourners so infuriated the London hackney coach-drivers by "cutting-in" that a duel of oaths and whips and swords turned the Lane into a bear-garden. And, indeed, for 2,000 years the street we have wandered through, with its interminable byways, has deserved the name of Street of Adventure. If at last (and I do not speak with confidence) the pen has emerged mightier than the sword, the struggle was long in doubt in Fleet Street. Right up to our own times the man of deeds was as like to find here congenial adventure as the man of words. Your Fleet Street scribbler drew blood indifferently with sword and tongue, and the pedants of our grandfathers' time had need of a

stout heart and stout cudgel as they wandered in the byways of Fleet Street after dark.

The reign of law had begun in Johnson's day, and to that great Englishman, illustrious for his learning, his justice, his humanity and his common sense, we will leave the final verdict upon Fleet Street.

Dr. Johnson's Verdict

"Sir," said he, "if you wish to have a just notion of the magnitude of this City, you must not be satisfied with seeing its great streets and squares, but must survey the innumerable little lanes and courts."

And again. Walking down Fleet Street one delightful day with Johnson, Boswell remarked that Fleet Street was the most cheerful scene in the world. "Fleet Street," said he, "is in my mind more delightful than Tempe."

"Aye, sir," said Johnson.

And once more the two were walking in Greenwich Park, and Johnson asked maliciously: "Is not this very fine?" "Yes, sir," replied the faithful parrot, "but not equal to Fleet Street." "You are right, sir," said Johnson. And, finally: "Why, sir," said he, "you find no man at all intellectual who is willing to leave London. No, sir, when a man is tired of London he is tired of life."

Fleet Street was Johnson's London and he was faithful to it unto death.

And every year a little more of what remains to us of Johnson's London is taken away. That

fact, you remember, was my justification for this little book.

Epilogue by Shakespeare

And now it is done ; yet it is proper that the greatest of all our Fleet Street worthies should send you away, smiling, on a note of hope.

"Be cheerful, sir,
Our revels now are ended : these our actors,
As I foretold you, were all spirits and
Are melted into air, into thin air :
And like the baseless fabric of this vision,
The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea, all which it inherit shall dissolve;
And like this insubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff
As dreams are made on, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep."

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